

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 33

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 33, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

117 Chapters

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1 Samuel 30:6

David "encouraged himself in the Lord" when everything around was dark and depressing. Satan's object is to hinder us in having this confidence in the Lord. He would fain lead us to make present things at all times the boundary of our soul's horizon; he would seek to surround us with a thick, dark, impenetrable cloud, so that we might not recognize our Father's countenance and our Father's hand beyond it all. But faith pierces the cloud, and goes upward to God. "For all that is in the world... is not of the Father" (1 John 2:16).

The Advocate With the Father

1 John 2:1

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

The Lord Jesus in heaven represents His redeemed people in two lovely aspects-as Priest before God, and as Advocate with the Father. The priesthood of the Lord Jesus as seen from the epistle to the Hebrews is with God, and is an exercise for us that we may not sin. It is to maintain us in spite of weakness here, in consistency with a heavenly calling, meeting us (in every form of testing and exercise and conflict with the opposing forces of Satan) with His powerful succor and precious sympathy. that we might hold fast the confession of His name, and be free for enjoyment of the heavenly sanctuary which He has opened to us by His perfect sacrifice.

Priesthood does not contemplate sin in the people of God. It is founded on the perfection of the sacrifice by which sins were removed from before God forever, and removed therefore from the conscience of the believer. Yet, as James says, "In many things we offend all [or, we all offend]." If there were no provision then for failure and sin in the believer, with all our humbling experience of how possible it is, how terrible it would be.

Now it is just here that in infinite grace the epistle of John brings in the office of Christ as Advocate. Let us consider the way He is presented in this connection. Addressing the whole family of God, in the endearing term of "children," he says, "These things I write unto you, that ye sin not." He refers, of course, to what has gone before in chapter 1. Three things belong to the Christian position. First, we walk in the light; the light is God perfectly revealed and known. Then, we have fellowship one with another in that light. And the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth us from all sin, is the basis of the whole position, alone making it possible for sinners such as we.

All that has thus gone before in chapter 1 is brought to bear upon our souls that we sin not, in chapter 2. But he immediately adds, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." Thus even when the sin of one of His is in question, the love of the Lord Jesus does not fail. Nor does He leave us to ourselves. He takes up our case and acts for us, according to the deep necessity of it. For this is just the force of "advocate." It is the same word in the original as "Comforter" applied to the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel. It is one who acts for us in the circumstances, whatever they may be, wherein we have need of Him. Then it is to be noted, "advocate with the Father." The sin of the believer has not changed the relationship in which he stands with the Father. We have changed our former place as criminals at the bar of God, for that of children with the Father. We can never even on the worst failure be disowned as such. This makes the intrusion of sin in the believer's life a far more heinous thing-being committed against all the light and relationship and love into which we have been introduced.

But there is the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin. This means no more conscience of sins (according to Heb. 10) for those who have believed God's testimony to the perfection of the finished work of His Son. That is, the conscience never again connects sin with judgment to come, but always with a judgment that has taken place in the death of Christ, and is forever past. The conscience rests where God rests, and He remembers our sins and iniquities as such no more.

But the accuser might seek occasion to tempt the fallen one to think he could never call God his Father again. Just in this very connection John is inspired to present the Advocate with the Father that we might know the relationship to be immutable. And besides, it is "Jesus Christ the righteous." He is there in all His personal perfection, as "the propitiation for our sins," in all the abiding and continual efficacy of His work, so that no charge can stand against those whom God has justified. Hence, sin has become an intrusion against holiness and communion that has been absolutely interrupted by it. And the blessed service of the Lord as Advocate is to restore that communion. Nor is it that we have to go to Christ to intervene for us. "If any man sin, we have an advocate." He acts from Himself to bring about in us all that is needed for restoration.

We need now look a little into the character of that wonderful action of His grace, for this is of the utmost practical importance. The object of it is to bring us to detest and judge in ourselves that wherein we have failed, to confess our sins that we may know a Father's forgiveness, and be restored to the joy of communion with Him.

This precious service of the Lord for us has been illustrated for us by His ways with Peter in the gospel of John (to which I turn). Chapter 13:1-11 gives us the principle of it in the symbolic washing of the disciples' feet. I say symbolic because of the Lord's words to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." There was clearly something far deeper in it than the mere lesson of humility. But verse 1 shows us the new position that the Lord was taking, that gives its character to all the subsequent communications. "Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father." And we have to go through the world out of which He had to depart; but He would not forget us in all our need. For, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." In His blessed and unfailing love was found the spring of His action that follows. In marvelous grace Peter was one who was allowed to hear of a love so beyond all our thought, the very night he was to deny that he ever knew Him. But who is it that undertakes the cause of those who are beset with danger in such a world as this, and are so liable to fail, stooping even to take their feet into His hands to wash them? It is none other than He into whose hands the Father has given all things. But what light is thrown on the defilement we so easily, and alas, too often carelessly contract in our walk, that necessitates the action of the Son of God to remove.

Peter resents the humiliation of the Lord in stooping to wash his feet till he learns that it is essential to his having part with Jesus where He was going. And thus we learn that while His wonderful service for us includes recovery from sin, and the soul's restoration, yet it goes much further in love that cannot bear a cloud between us and Him; and He provides for the removal of whatever would intercept the light and joy of His presence. Peter thought he could not have too much of such washing—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

This leads the Lord to distinguish between two applications of the water. In type, water in Scripture represents the Word of God applied in the power of the Spirit. The first is that by which we are born wholly anew, and made partakers of a new life and nature. The application can never be repeated. The second is what the washing of the feet implied, namely, the constant application of the Word to preserve or deliver us from what would hinder blessed nearness to Him. Nor are we left to apply it to ourselves: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." We see it as we follow out His ways with Peter in the unutterable grace of the Lord to His poor servant, and with each of us. No warning led him to suspect the danger he was in from confidence in himself. He thought that a warm heart would carry him through anything for the Lord: "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." But nature's energy must fail in such a path as that, and he succumbs before the taunt of a servant girl, even to deny repeatedly that he ever knew the Lord. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." That look broke his heart. It told of a love that knew no change.

Communion had yet to be restored. There was still the sense of distance, and a void in his heart that none but Christ could fill. He goes back to the old occupation once so willingly surrendered for Him, leading others with him. It was a profitless night, but made way for the blessed Lord to intervene in His power and grace, and lead Peter into the reality of what he could not understand when the Lord wanted to wash his feet. "Jesus stood on the shore." The net was now well filled, and all brought to land, where already a meal was prepared for them by the Lord Himself. When it was over, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" How gently and yet irresistibly the question would recall his boast: "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Who had failed so appallingly as he? What can he say? To whom can he turn but to the One so sinned against? "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." But it is to be noted in the original that Peter does not content himself with using the general word for love that the Lord employed, but uses the word for the special love of a friend-"Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee"; and so again when the Lord repeats His question. But three times he had denied Him.

It was painful work, but the conscience must be deeply probed, and the root of his failure laid bare that the recovery might be thorough. The third time the Lord puts the question, but with a touch of inimitable grace He adopts Peter's word -already implying that He trusts him: "Simon, son of Jonas, art thou attached to Me?" Peter could not but feel it, but under that all-searching eye fixed on him in such love he could only answer, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee." The work is done. The defiled feet are washed, and the Lord can confide to Peter His most precious interests here-His lambs and sheep-to shepherd and to feed. And now He gives him, in the power of communion fully restored, to take the path in which once he had broken down so utterly. He should go to death for the Lord.

This is a precious sample of the action of the Advocate in the case of the sin of His own. It is the Lord who sets Himself to apply His Word to the conscience and heart, to detect and bring to light what it is that has broken communion, or hindered the enjoyment of His presence so that we may confess it, and judge ourselves. The moment that point is reached He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

How blessed the revelation of these distinct aspects of the service of the Lord Jesus for us, whether as Priest with God, or as Advocate with the Father. And the ways of His unflinching grace and love to maintain us in the enjoyment of our heavenly relationships; or, when we have failed, to

restore us to fellowship with the Father and with Himself, which is the most precious privilege. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end"-till we shall need the assurance of it no more. But oh! how it should make us abhor the defiling thing, whatever it may be, which has needed the service of the Son of God to deliver us from it. He "desirest truth in the inward parts," but He has to work to produce it so that with a heart that has nothing to condemn us we may have confidence before Him.

After Man's Day

The terrible end of man's day is described in 2 Thess. 1 and 2. This scripture gives us the moral side of it; that is, the setting up of man as God, chiefly as a result of false doctrine, of the substitution of man's gospel of lies for God's gospel of truth, of man's gospel of perdition for God's gospel of salvation. But there is another aspect of the close of man's day, which is violence, marked by wars more appalling yet than what we are now passing through; wars between nations such as are predicted in Matt. 24 and Rev. 6; and last, an alliance of the whole world, brought about by the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet defying the Lord God Almighty Himself (Rev. 16:12-16). In the next chapter we see how this battle, the like of which has never been seen, ends (17:13, 14). This end coincides with 2 Thess. 1:7, 8, and 2:8. It is the end of man's day and the beginning of the day of the Lord, or day of the Son, of man. Between the two there is no interval..

Thus we see that the day of the Lord, as it is designated in the epistles, or the day of the Son of man, as the Lord Himself speaks of it in the gospels, begins with stern judgments. It ends in like manner (Rev. 20:7-10). Beginning and ending are marked by the same character; that is, the putting down of man's rebellion first when the Lord takes the kingdom, and finally when He delivers it to God, even the Father that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

The Lord's reign is the great theme of the prophets, and it was the great expectation of the disciples at the Lord's 'first coming. They looked for it before and after His death-saw nothing apart or beyond. If the kingdom was not established there and then, and the throne set up for the Son of David (for this the Lord was to them), their hope was a blank. Such at least was their way of reckoning. Well, the kingdom was not established then, and a more immediate hope was set before them and us, not earthly but heavenly.

This hope, however, does not abolish that of Israel. It is apart from it, above it, and, in accomplishment, preceding it. Israel's hope is in abeyance because, as a nation, "they sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." In consequence of their refusal of Him, they have fallen under Hosea's fearful sentence "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and, without an ephod, and without teraphim." Hos. 3:4. This has been their condition for nearly two thousand years-"many days" indeed. But it will not last forever. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He has made promises to Abraham in behalf of his posterity, and He keeps to them in spite of all Israel's present unwillingness and stiff-neckedness. Hence, Hosea adds, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD (Jehovah) their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD (Jehovah) and His goodness in the latter days." They were unwilling in the days of the Lord Jesus' grace, when He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." They were too proud to understand such condescension. But they shall be willing in the day of His power, after they have passed through the burning fiery furnace. And when He takes His seat on David's throne, and Israel is gathered under His scepter, then will all the nations of the earth cluster around the restored people and

share in its blessing.

After the Lord has subdued and swept away His enemies, He will establish a reign of peace, the duration of which is stated to be a thousand years (Rev. 20:6). It will be earth's sabbath after six thousand years of groans and travail. Real, lasting peace must be by the Prince of peace. Jerusalem, so long trodden under foot will be then the metropolis of the world, the city of the great King, the joy of the whole earth. The land of Palestine, now a wilderness, will be then like the garden of Eden; as it is written, "The desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it." Eze. 36:34-36.

There are magnificent pictures of this day in Isa. 11; 35, and 45. And the blessing is not for Israel only, for we read in Zech. 2:10-12, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be My people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me unto thee. And the LORD shall inherit Judah His portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again." What a contrast with the present day, so full of sorrow and turmoil! Oh, that fallen men would own their unfitness to bring about happiness where their sin has brought disaster and ruin! Our blessed Lord alone can and will do that, not for a transient moment only, but according to the abiding efficacy of His redemption work. For upon this work all rests—the divine counsels and the reconciliation of all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

The day of the Lord will end as it began; that is, in judgment. It seems strange to speak of judgment after a blissful reign of a thousand years, during which the presence of the Lord in glory ought to have captivated every human heart. Yet so it is. It would be a great mistake to take for granted that the whole race of men will be converted during the Millennium. Some out of all nations will be, no doubt, and the whole of the Jewish people, according as it is written, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. 31:34. And again "As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain." Isa. 66:22. Yet the mass of the Gentiles will remain unregenerate, subdued in presence of the King's power and glory, but not born of God. Satan, who shall have been bound and cast into the bottomless pit, and all that time powerless to tempt them, will regain his hold upon them as soon as he is loosed from his prison. His power of seduction will be then greater than ever, if possible, and he will lead them to open rebellion just as he had done at the beginning of the day of the Lord. There will be this difference, however, that at the beginning he leads men against the Lord in Person, and the Lord destroys them with the sharp sword that goes out of His mouth—, as we see in Revelation 19; whereas, at the end, he leads them against the camp of the saints round about, and the beloved city (Jerusalem); and then and there they are destroyed, not by the Lord in Person, but by fire coming down from God out of heaven (Rev. 20). Thereby will all the ungodly be devoured, and their final destiny will be settled by the

great white throne before which all the dead of all times are to appear, for the hearing of their condemnation. Here "the dead" are those who have departed from this world without saving faith "the dead in Christ" having all been previously raised, raised before the reign of a thousand years, to be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4; Rev. 20.) The very heavens and earth as we know them will pass away and be melted by fire, by reason of their having been polluted by the presence of Satan and his angelic hosts above, and of Satan and his human hosts on earth.

This is the end of the first creation. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," and the Lord Jesus then, as Son of man and in this quality ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead, will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, "that God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) may be all in all."

Now begins what is called in 2 Peter "the day of God"-a remarkable expression. A remarkable state of things too, as compared with God's previous ways. All is new here-new creation, new condition of man in it. For there are men in it, men created anew, saints preserved out of the cataclysm in which the old earth will disappear, and translated in a changed state into the new. There are no longer Jews and Gentiles here, as we know them in the present dispensation. They are one family, one people, the people of God, and God dwelling with them, their God. He did not dwell with Adam in the earthly paradise, but only visited him now and then. Nor did He make His abode with men when the Word was made flesh, for it is written that He tabernacled among us, which implies that He was only a sojourner. In the new creation, the permanent presence of God will be the abiding proof of His delight in men. How dear a creature man is to the heart of God. He made man to be happy. Man fell, lost himself through sin; but God, if obliged to punish him for righteousness' sake, would not give him up. It was to seek and to save that which was lost that He sent His Son, become man for that purpose. In virtue of the wondrous work of redemption, the work of His Son, not only will heaven be peopled with men everlastingly blessed, but new heavens and a new earth will come out of the old, and in the new earth men in whom God will take His pleasure as they in Him. No tears will be shed there, no death to crush the heart, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any pain, for the former things have passed away! Well may the Apostle exclaim, and all believers with him, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." Rom. 11:33-36. The Bible Treasury

At the Gate

Many years ago in England, a farmer was at work in his field when he saw a party of horsemen riding about his farm. He had one field over which he was especially anxious that they should not ride.

"Shut the gate to the field," he said to one of his boys, "and on no account let it be opened."

The boy did as he was told, but was hardly at his post before the riders came up and ordered the gate to be opened. This the boy refused to do, stating the orders he had received and his determination not to disobey them. Threats and bribes were offered in vain.

After a while one of the huntsmen said in commanding tones, "My boy, you do not know me. I am the Duke of Wellington, and I command you to open that gate that I and my friends may pass through." (You will remember the Duke of Wellington was the general who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo.)

The boy lifted his cap and stood uncovered before the man whom all England delighted to honor, then answered firmly, "I am sure that the Duke of Wellington would not wish me to disobey orders. I must keep this gate shut and not allow anyone to pass except with my master's permission."

Greatly pleased, the old warrior lifted his own hat and said, "I honor the boy or man who can neither be bribed nor frightened into doing wrong," and he handed the boy a gold coin. Then the old Duke put spurs to his horse and galloped away.

You are a gatekeeper, young believer, and your Master's command is, "Be thou faithful unto death." Are you ever tempted to drink or to smoke or to take drugs? Keep the gate of your mouth fast closed. When tempted to lie, to deal falsely, to disobey, keep the gate of your ears fast shut against such temptation. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life" (Jas. 1:12).

The Authority of the Scriptures

We desire to offer a few earnest words on a subject which we deem to be of commanding interest and importance. It is this: The divine sufficiency and supreme authority of Holy Scripture, and the urgent need of submitting ourselves absolutely to its guidance in all things.

In thus stating our thesis, we would not have any to suppose for a moment that we undervalue human writings in their proper place. Nothing is further from our thoughts. Indeed it would ill become us to speak disparagingly of a branch of Christian ministry so largely used of God in all ages of His Church's history, and specially in this our own day.

Also, how often has a book or tract been made a real blessing to the soul, either in bringing one to Christ, or building up or helping on in Him! How often may we have read some passage of Scripture and seen nothing in it, until the Lord had used some paragraph in a human writing to unlock its treasures to our hearts! We are none of us self-sufficient. We are dependent on one another. We grow by that which every joint supplieth. We need all the "helps" which God has set in the body for our common profit and blessing.

But having said this much to guard against misunderstanding, and to put human writings in their right place, we return to our special object in this brief address. There is but one supreme and paramount authority, and that is the Word of God. Many human writings are interesting as references, valuable as aids, but they are worthless, yes, mischievous, as authority.

Scripture is all-sufficient. We want absolutely nothing in the way of guidance and authority beyond what we possess in the sacred canon of Scripture. No doubt, it is only by the Holy Spirit we can understand, appreciate, or be guided by Scripture; and moreover, God may use a human voice or a human pen to help us; but Scripture is divinely sufficient. It can make a child wise unto salvation; and it can make a man perfect unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Now, having such a guide, such an authority, what becomes us as Christians, as servants of God, and servants of Christ? Why, clearly, to submit ourselves absolutely and unreservedly to its teaching in all things. We are bound by every argument and every motive which can possibly sway the heart, to test everything in which we are engaged, or with which we stand associated, by the holy standard of the Word of God; and if we find anything, no matter what, which will not stand that test, to abandon it at once and forever.

And it is precisely here that we feel there is such serious failure in the professing church. Too often we find the conscience is not under the immediate action and government of the Word. Instead of this, human opinions bear sway; human creeds and confessions of faith govern the heart and form the religious character; human traditions and habits of thought are allowed a formative influence over the soul.

If it is merely a question of personal salvation, profit, or blessing, Scripture may be listened to. But the moment it becomes a question of Christ's authority over us, in spirit, and soul, and body; when

the Word of God is brought to bear upon our entire practical career; upon our personal habits; our domestic arrangements; our commercial pursuits; our religious associations; our ecclesiastical position; then, alas! it becomes apparent how completely the authority of Holy Scripture is often virtually thrown overboard. In fact, the enemy of souls seems to succeed as completely in robbing professing Christians of the real value, power, and authority of the Word of God, as when, during that long and dreary period of the middle ages, it was wrapped in the shroud of a dead language, and buried in the dark cloisters of Rome.

It is perfectly appalling, when one comes in contact with the actual condition of things among professing Christians, to observe the general ignorance of Scripture, and the carelessness about it. Nor can any thoughtful person doubt that the carelessness is the cause of the ignorance. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17). But if the Word of God is neglected, and practically ignored as an authority, need we marvel when we find people ignorant of its precious contents?

We have been much struck lately in our dealings with some professing Christians, in noticing how little moral weight Scripture seems to possess with them. You will rarely meet with anyone who is prepared to start with this one grand point, that the voice of the Holy Ghost in Scripture is absolutely conclusive; that it admits of no appeal; that it closes all discussion. We speak not now of man's interpretation of Scripture, of anything in which it can be said, "That is your opinion." We speak only of the written Word of God which we possess, and to which we are individually responsible to submit ourselves in all things. God has put His Word into our hands, and He has put His Spirit into our hearts, and by that Spirit we can understand the Word; and we are solemnly bound to be guided and governed by that Word in all the details of our practical career.

It is this that we feel imperatively called upon to press upon the hearts and consciences of our readers; and now we leave it with you to consider, as before the Lord, your personal responsibility in this weighty matter. We would entreat you, as you love the Lord Jesus Christ, to examine in the light of Scripture your entire position and path; and by the grace of God, and for His glory, to abandon at once and forever all that is not in perfect accordance with that holy standard. Thus shall your path be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Pro. 4:18). Oh! may the true language of all our hearts be, "Speak Lord; for Thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:9). "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). God grant it for Christ's sake.

Be Careful

Keep a warm gospel heart. Christian experience, according to Philippians, is full of the gospel. Paul was as hearty in gospel work at the close of his course as at the commencement. Compare Acts 9 with 2 Timothy. Never deceive yourself by the thought that because you are getting on in higher lines of truth, therefore your interest in gospel work must flag. The joy of Father, Son and Spirit in Luke 15 is essentially a gospel joy. Muse well on that word: "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Take care not to follow in the wake of the elder son: "He was angry and would not go in."

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,

And love that soul through me,

That I may nobly do my part

To bring that soul to Thee.

O Savior, heed my fervent cry,

I long Thy name to glorify

In bringing souls to Thee!

Be Still

One of the hardest temptations for the Christian to resist is that of self-vindication in the face of what appears to us to be unjust criticism. This is one of those many areas of the Christian life in which faith is absolutely necessary. We must have faith that God hears the criticism, that He will set the bounds of the attack, that in His own time He will vindicate the truth, that our reputation is safe in His keeping, and that if He permits us to become the offscouring of the world or-ininitely worse-the offscouring of our brethren, He will give grace and glory. We must, of course, be sure that we commit a right cause to God, and not a faulty one.

The Bible

"Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89.

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

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

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

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

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

Bought With a Price

I am going to be like Christ in glory; then I must be as like Him now as ever I can be. Of course we all do fail, but we are to have our hearts filled with Christ.

Remember this, that the place you are in is that of an epistle of Christ. We are set for this, that the life of Christ should be manifested in us. Christ has settled the question of our sins with God; He appears in the presence of God for us, and we are in the presence of the world for Him. "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." John 14:20. If I know He is in me, I am to manifest the life of Christ in everything. If He has loved me with unutterable love which passes knowledge, I feel bound in heart to Him; my business is to glorify Him in everything I do. "Bought with a price"-that is settled-if bought, I am His. But I press upon you that earnestness of heart which cleaves to Him, especially in these last evil days when we wait for His Son from heaven. Oh! if Christians were more thoroughly Christ-like, the world would understand what it is all about. There is a great deal of profession and talk; and the activity of the Spirit of God-thank God-there is; but do you think that if a heathen came to your home to learn what Christianity means, he would find out?

The Lord give you to have such a sense of the love of Christ that, as bought with a price, the only object of your souls may be to live by Christ and to live for Christ; and for those who do not know Him, that they may learn how He came down in love to seek us, and because righteousness could not pass over sin, died to put it away.

Christ Our All-Sufficiency

Our Lord loves to be trusted, to be used, to be drawn upon. We can never go too far in counting on the love of His heart or the strength of His hand. There is nothing too small, nothing too great for Him; He has all power in heaven and on earth; He is Head over all things to His Church; He holds the universe together; He upholds all things by the word of His power. Philosophers talk of the forces and laws of nature; the Christian thinks with delight of Christ, His hand, His Word, His mighty power. By Him all things were created, and by Him all things consist.

And then His love! What rest, what comfort, what joy, to know and remember that the almighty Creator and Upholder of the universe is the everlasting Lover of our souls! that He loves us perfectly; that His eye is ever upon us, His heart ever toward us; that He has charged Himself with all our wants, whatever these wants may be- whether physical, mental or spiritual! There is not a single thing within the entire range of our necessities that is not treasured up for us in Christ. He is heaven's treasury-God's storehouse-and all for us.

Why then should we ever turn to another? Why should we ever, directly or indirectly, make known our wants to a poor fellow mortal? Why not go straight to Jesus? Do we want sympathy? Who can sympathize with us like our most merciful High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities? Do we want help of any kind? Who can help us like our almighty Friend, the possessor of unsearchable riches? Do we want counsel or guidance? Who can give it like the blessed One who is the very wisdom of God, and who is made of God unto us wisdom? Oh, let us not wound His loving heart and dishonor His glorious name by turning away from Him. Let us jealously watch against the tendency so natural to us to cherish human hopes, creature-confidences, and earthly expectations. Let us abide hard by the Fountain, and we shall never have to complain of the streams. In a word, let us seek to live by faith, and thus glorify God.

A Letter to Christian Parents

Some time ago I was in a home when a father asked his little child to shut the door. The response was, "I don't want to." "Then poor Dad will have to shut the door himself." "I don't care; I just don't feel like it."

And I saw "poor Dad" get up and shut the door. Uncontrolled at six; a delinquent at sixteen?

I must confess to an immediate urge to have that child for about fifteen minutes, but a more sober reflection brought the realization that it was really the father who needed the discipline.

One of the most dangerous signs of the times is the deterioration of home life, causing a growing disrespect of children for parents and others in authority. In 2 Tim. 3, the Apostle Paul, in describing the last days, accurately tells us where we are now.

The longer I live, and the more I see of the joys and sorrows, the success and failure of this life, the more I'm convinced that the home problem is the greatest one which exists today. The home is the center of everything. Whether humble or pretentious, the home provides greater possibilities for joy or sorrow than all the rest of the world. The downfall of many characters can be traced to some defect in the home life, while the loveliest picture earth furnishes is a family going on together, on their way to heaven. We step from the portals of our home into the social, moral and civil world. What we are in the home will be what we are in the assembly and in all fields of life.

When God Himself would found a nation, He made the home life the deciding factor. In choosing Abraham it is said of him, "He will command his children and his household after him" (Gen. 18:19). Here we have two fundamental ideas for a successful home-authority and example. Without these you cannot have a happy home, assembly or nation. God's ideal nation starts with the home, with the father of the home "walking in the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment," his children and household following after him.

Anarchy is not born in the streets of New York, Chicago or London. The question of obedience to law is settled in childhood. The child who does not obey his father and mother is not likely to obey social, civil or divine laws. When God said, "Children obey your parents," He revealed where obedience originates.

A father and mother who had raised six Christian children, without a black sheep among them, were asked how they had done it. With a smile, the father replied, "With prayer and a hickory stick." Two better instruments were never used. This is not meant to encourage the brutal punishment of children, but when prayerfulness and wholesome authority go hand-in-hand, obedient and godly children follow. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Pro. 22:6.

Regarding the matter of authority, we as parents must exercise it in a Christ-like attitude of love. We have seen children driven from home by the stern and harsh application of a father's authority. Our acts of discipline must be tempered with large doses of love and understanding-just as our

Father above has dealt with us. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6-11).

Authority alone is not sufficient, however. As noted above, a godly example is also required. Are we, as fathers, exhibiting our obedience to the authorities to which we should be subject-not only the Word of God, but also the civil authorities He has placed over us?

What kind of legacy are we leaving our children? Our day requires more prayer for grace and wisdom than ever before, for the needed help to bring up our children as trophies of His love. One day soon we shall give God an account as to our stewardship of the children He has entrusted to our care.

In closing, a true story comes to mind which spoke to my own heart. One beautiful, hot day a father took his daughter for a short hike into the foothills. As he lay down under the shade tree, his little girl ran about gathering flowers, bringing them to him, saying, "Pretty, pretty." Soon the father fell asleep, and the child wandered away.

When he awoke, his first thought was, "Where is Nancy?" He shouted at the top of his voice, but all he heard was his own voice echoing back. Then, he peered over a nearby cliff, and there upon the rocks and bushes below he saw the broken body of his beloved Nancy. Ever after he accused himself of being the killer of his little child, because while he was sleeping she had wandered over the precipice.

How many fathers and mothers are now sleeping while their children wander over dangerous cliffs falling into indifference and sin. How many parents-either knowingly or unconsciously- encourage their children to disrespect authority and the Word of God? Now is the time to train our children in the way they ought to go. What a tragic day it will be if we should awaken from our spiritual indifference to find that while we were sleeping, our children wandered away!

Cleaving to the Lord: Word to the Young

Acts 11

It is worthy of remark that in this chapter we have the first account of Gentile converts-of the receiving in sovereign goodness and grace poor sinners who had not even the promises to boast of which God had given to the Jews. To such it is, too, that Barnabas comes with the earnest exhortation contained in verse 23: "That with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

What Peter was taught here as to the Gentiles, we all have to learn as to ourselves. When the blessed news of grace and pardon first reaches a sinner's ears and heart, he rejoices in the thought of pardon and forgiveness. He does right. Jesus, the blessed Son of God, has met him in mercy with His precious blood. When there have been deep discoveries of sin before the soul has become happy, the peace of the soul is more settled, for the sin to which grace is applied is in a measure already known. But when, through the proclamation of divine power, without previous convictions, the soul has suddenly received joy (though there is always the discovery that we are sinners), the knowledge of the depth of sin in the heart, and what has to be forgiven and cleansed is apt to be very small.

The consequence is that after God has called us and the divine light has broken into our souls, we now feel disturbed and uncertain, and even begin sometimes to doubt the fact of our being cleansed. This is wrong. The deeper discovery of sin and the knowledge of our own hearts are useful. If we walk humbly and near to God this knowledge will be made, comparatively speaking, peacefully; if not, it will be made in humiliation and failure. But you may not call unclean what God has cleansed. God has brought cleansing and pardon to us down here. We have not to wait for it until we go up there. God has cleansed you. You are clean now. But I desire to lead you to some further exercise of heart upon it, and clearer apprehension of God's ways-to a fuller exercise of conscience, that your peace may be as solid as your joy was genuine when you first heard of grace and forgiveness.

In Luke 15 the great principle set forth is that it is God's happiness when we are brought back to Him. Of course the joy of the restored one also comes in, but it is not the primary thing. The object of all three parables (or the three parts of one parable) is not to show our joy, but the joy of God in our restoration. The three parables all teach the same grace; but we get in them the joy of the Son, of the Spirit, and of the Father. Notice in the first two a grace which finds and brings back what was lost, without any further question of the state of the soul. In the third, we see man's departure even into the lowest degradation of sin, and what passes in his soul on his return, till he is clothed in divine righteousness, with Christ, in His Father's house.

God has foreseen and provided for the whole case of the sinner. The younger son was just as great a sinner when he left his father's house as when he was eating husks with the swine. He had abandoned God to do his own will. But the Lord pursues the case to the full degradation of sin-for sin degrades man. The young man presents to us one who comes to himself, turns back toward

God, but has not yet met God, nor had the best robe put on him. Thus he could not know in his conscience, divine righteousness. When he really meets his father, not only is he in tender love received when in his rags into his father's arms, but also he is made righteously fit for the house-clothed with Christ. His father was on his neck when he was in his rags, but he was not received into the house in that state; he could not have been.

But God has provided for the sinner what Adam in his innocence did not have. He has provided Christ. Grace reigns through righteousness. The best robe, no part of the son's portion before he left, is now put on him, and he is fit for the house to which that robe belonged. All the extent of his soul's departure from God has been weighed, just as the sinner must be exercised about it, and will be, till self is wholly given up as a ground on which he can stand before God. There can be no going in legally, as a hired servant. Before God it is rags and exclusion, or the best robe and joyful admission. All true experiences lead to that emptying of self, and Christ being all, and we in Him before God. Then, as I have said, our peace is as solid as the joy of the thought of forgiveness was blessed, and the joy itself is deeper.

Another truth is connected with this. God's having perfectly cleansed us by the blood of Christ, the Spirit dwells in the cleansed heart. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:14. The Spirit gives us the consciousness of our relationship as dear children. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal. 4:6. We who are the temples of the Holy Ghost may well ask ourselves continually: What manner of persons ought we to be? But do not let failures make us doubt that we have it. Low and wretched as was the state the Galatians had fallen into, they never doubted that they had the Spirit of God; but they were going wrong as to the ground of their standing, as to how they received it; so the Apostle had to ask them, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Gal. 3:2.

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance. We have life as truly as Christ is alive, but we are not yet in heaven. The thief, indeed, was privileged to be taken directly home, believing only "today," but that very day he was the first companion Christ had in paradise! We do not look for such immediate departure, but our ground is the same; we are as truly saved, but not so soon to be in heaven. Rather we have to go through this evil world-to go through it as crucified with Christ, dead indeed, but risen-to go through it with His Spirit dwelling in us. Be careful lest you grieve that Spirit. You have to go through the world bearing the name of Christ upon you. See that you bring no reproach upon that blessed name by being inconsistent. The world will be quick to see inconsistencies and to exclaim, "There are your Christians!" Of course, it is only through His grace that you can carry such a treasure through an evil world; but there is power in Christ, there is sufficiency in Christ, for all He would have you to do or to be.

Paul exhorted them that they should cleave to the Lord. Some are allowed to have a long season of joy on first believing; but God knows our hearts, and how soon we should be depending on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our object; joy is not our object. Do not let your joy lead you to forget the source of it, and then it need never wane. This joy is right and beautiful in its place; I am not saying a word against it-God forbid. But I warn you against resting in it. Do not lean on it for strength. There is a danger that joy, however genuine, may make you forget how dependent you are every moment. Depend upon Him; cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Do not be content with

being happy (may you continue so); but, with Paul, forgetting the things that are behind, press on, etc. (Phil. 1).

I have seen many Christians so full of joy that they thought there was no such thing as sin left. It is true that sin no longer remains on you, but the flesh is in you to the end. The old stock is there; and you will find that if you are not watching, if divine life is not cherished and cultivated in your hearts by looking at Christ and feeding on Him, then that old stock will be sprouting forth into buds. If it does, they must be nipped off as they appear. No good fruit comes off the old stock. It is the new that bears fruit to God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this, but think of Christ- cleave to Him. And may your soul be maintained in this truth, that Christ is your life. And as He is your life, so is He the object of that life. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

As you grow in this knowledge of Him, a joy grows, deeper than that of first conversion. I have known Christ between thirty and forty years; and I can say that I have ten thousand times more joy now than I had at first. It is a deeper, calmer joy. The water rushing down from a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes the most noise; but you will find the water that runs in the plain is deeper and calmer.

Observe, they are exhorted with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. A distracted heart is the bane of a Christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have no desire or eye for the trash of the world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be the question, What harm is there in this or that? Rather, Am I doing this for Christ? Can Christ go along with me in this? If you are in communion with Him, you will readily detect what is not of Him. Do not let the world come in and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you young ones. The world lies shining before you, endeavoring to attract you. What else does it fill its shop windows for? Its smiles are all deceitful; still it is smiling upon you. It makes many promises it cannot fulfill; still it promises. The fact is, your hearts are too big for the world; it cannot fill them. They are too little for Christ, for He fills heaven; yet He will fill you to overflowing.

Observe again in Acts 11 that it is to the Lord they were to cleave-not to duty, or law, or ordinances (though these are good in their places), but to the Lord. He knew how treacherous the heart was, and how soon it would put anything in His place. You will have to learn what is in your heart. Abide with God, and you will learn your heart with Him and under His grace; else you will have to learn it with the devil through his successful temptations. But God is faithful; and if you have been getting away from Him, and other things have been coming in and forming a crust around your heart, and you want to get back again, God says, What is this crust? I must have you deal with it and get rid of it. Remember, Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, and not the world's. The denial of this fact is an artifice of the devil. Do not let the devil come in between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have gotten away from Him, return to Him; doubt not His joy in having you back. Count upon His love; look at the sin which led you away with horror, but do not wrong Him by distrusting His love any more than one would wrong an affectionate husband or wife, by throwing a doubt on their love if he had been for a moment ungracious. Hate the flesh in yourself, but remember how He has loved you and will love you to the end. Mistrust not His work; mistrust not His love. "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (v. 18). All is of God.

I would have you carry in your minds three things which by grace are given you. First, cleaving to the Lord; second, perfect forgiveness; third, a purged conscience. To illustrate this last, take the case of Peter. He denied his Lord-denied Him to a servant maid-but the Lord had turned and looked on him, and he had gone out and wept bitterly. A few weeks after this (Acts 3), he could say that Israel was a lost and ruined people because "ye denied the Holy One and the Just." That was the very thing he had done himself, and done in a worse way too, for he had been with Him as His friend for three years. But his conscience was purged; he knew he was forgiven; and now he could turn around and fearlessly charge others with the very thing he had done himself.

One word more. Talk with Him. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of near communion with Him who has loved you with such great love!

The Closet: the Battlefield of Faith

1 Samuel

David had been preparing for public service in the secret school of God. God will always work in secret with that soul which He intends to serve Him in public. In the desert he had learned the resources which faith has in God. He had slain the lion and the bear.

Are not our failures invariably because we have not been in secret with the living God? This is the essential and primary matter. Do we esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Our strength is in walking in fellowship with the living God. David had already gone through trial, and had therefore proved the God in whom he trusted. There had been dealing between his soul and God in the wilderness. O beloved, where is it that the saints really learn to get the victory? I believe it is where no eye sees us save God's. The hearty denying of self, the taking up the cross in secret, the knowing the way in the retirement of our closets, to cast down imaginations, and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; these are our highest achievements. The closet is the great battlefield of faith. Let the foe be met and conquered there. He who has much to do with God in secret, cannot use carnal weapons, and this should show us the importance of coming forth from the presence of the living God into all our service, that we may be thus prepared to detect and mortify all the pretensions of the flesh. It is sad indeed to see a saint trying to fight in the Lord's name, but clothed in the world's armor.

David said, moreover, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." v. 37. He knew that one was as easy to God as the other. When we are in communion with God we do not shrink from difficulty, for what is difficulty to him? Faith measures every difficulty by the power of God, and then the mountain becomes a plain. Too often, we think that in little things less than Omnipotence will do, and then it is that we fail. Have we not seen zealous and devoted saints fail in some trifling thing? The cause is, that they have not thought of bringing God by faith into all their ways. Abraham could leave his family and his father's house, and go out at the command of God, not knowing whither he went; but the moment he meets a difficulty in his own wisdom, and gets down into Egypt, what does he do? He constantly fails in comparatively small things.

Faith discerns our own weakness so clearly that it sees that nothing less than the power of God can enable us to overcome anything. So faith never makes light of the danger, for it knows what we are, just as on the other hand, faith never faints at the danger, because it knows what God is.

Colossians 1:28

Paul labored that he might present every man in a spiritual state answering to this revelation of Christ. He knew that union with Christ, realized in the heart, was a safeguard from the wiles of the enemy to which the Colossians were exposed. He knew the unutterable value of this union, and of its realization by faith. He labored, he wrestled in prayer-for it is indeed a conflict- in order that the full sense of this union with the glorified Head might be wrought in their hearts, so that the Christ on high should be in them by faith.

Concern for My Brother

"Love covereth all sins" (Pro. 10:12). What a wonderful statement this is! It implies something very practical and active-not theoretical-for this is the distinctive characteristic by which the Christian is to be known (John 13:35). Love is the difference between religion and Christianity- between sincerity and the synthetic and superficial. It is the only motive for acceptable service to the Lord.

This love, put by God into the believer's heart (Rom. 5:5), is the enabling power to act as we ought. It is a love that rejoices when others are being praised and honored and we are not. It is a love that is thankful when the Lord uses others for the promotion of His glory, without envy, jealousy, or other unworthy feelings, however we may label them. Real love for the Lord's people will always lead us to endeavor to put someone else forward instead of ourselves.

In what other ways do we see that "love covereth"? Perhaps the most practical demonstration of this is the absence of gossip-never speaking of our brother or sister in a negative way. We should shrink from exposing them by tale bearing. When we know anything wrong, we rather go to the Lord about it. This reveals our true feelings-our own spiritual state. When we spread things around, the whole company is infected; but when we go to the Lord, the Holy Spirit can, in answer to our prayers, begin to work upon the heart and conscience of the wrongdoer, to bring him to repentance or to break him down under the discipline of the Lord.

But love for our brother will go further, leading us to go to him tenderly, graciously, kindly and meekly, seeking to help him in his difficulty, pointing out the wrong, and praying with him. (See Gal. 6:1, 2.)

There is a beautiful little picture in the Old Testament in connection with the candlestick that is very instructive as to our relationships in the body of believers. A candlestick was really a little olive-oil lamp with a wick. The wick would burn just so long, then would char and blacken, needing to be snuffed. The Lord told Moses to make a golden candlestick with seven lamps, and its snuffers and snuff dishes of pure gold.

The more I read my Bible, the more I am impressed with the importance of every word. What is there in snuffers and snuff dishes? Well, if a lamp is going to burn brightly, it needs to be snuffed sometimes. And if we want to burn brightly for Christ, there will be many a time when we will have to judge ourselves in the presence of the Lord, or we will be just like the burned wick which obscured the light.

The priest of old was to go in and trim the lamp, using a golden snuffer. Gold in Scripture speaks of that which is divine, so the believer who reproves his brother is to go to him in fellowship with the Lord. He may be able to help his brother if he goes in this spirit.

What did the priest do with the snuff when he took it away? Did he scatter it around, getting it on his white robe, and on his hands, defiling the garments of the other priests? Oh no! He was to take that dirty black snuff and put it in a golden snuff dish, and cover it up so that it would not defile

anyone else. That is what love does! It does not spread abroad our brother's failures, but covers them up in the presence of God.

If Satan cannot get us to overlook sin and to go on as though nothing had happened, he will seek to have us go to the other extreme. David knew something of this when he said, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." 2 Sam. 24:14. There is a tendency with us to be hard and unforgiving toward one another, forgetting His mercy and grace in our own case. So we have the urging of the Holy Spirit, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4:32. This is a forgiveness that includes the grace to forget.

It is well for us to remember that the assembly is a company of repentant sinners, and heaven is a Home for repentant sinners. As we seek by His grace to maintain the truth of God, may we keep before us a sense of the grace, mercy, and patience that has been shown us.

Daniel's Deliverance

Never were two more sweeping measures passed by any government than those enforced by Darius the Mede in the days when he had for prime minister Daniel, the Jewish captive. The first prohibited for the space of thirty days all practice of religion whatsoever. The second not only annulled this, but proclaimed the worship of the true God throughout all the one hundred and twenty provinces of this monarch's mighty dominion. Both were published within the course of a week or so.

But as to these measures, what caused their enactment? What led Darius to preclude every petition saving those addressed directly to himself for that period? Again, why did he so quickly strike his pen through his newly-framed bill? The cause in each case was Daniel.

Now this man had, like Joseph before him, been raised to great eminence in a land wherein he was a stranger. God raised both for the accomplishment of His purposes and the help of His people.

Daniel was chief president, and placed in authority over all the counselors of Darius. But this fact made him the victim of jealousy. A Jewish premier was, of course, intolerable to the pride of the Medo-Persian nobles. The result was that they plotted his downfall. But where could they find a fault? His administration was blameless, his life irreproachable. They could only find it in the fact that he did not acknowledge their gods. His religion and theirs differed. Theirs was one of form, and allowed infinite latitude; his was one of conscience, and bound his very being to a principle, the maintenance of which was dearer to him than life. Theirs might be held in abeyance or temporary neglect; his was a matter of as much importance as daily food. Theirs connected them with idols; his sustained him in communion with the living God.

Of all this his artful enemies were fully aware, and hence their clever device.

They succeeded in obtaining from the unsuspecting king a decree which forbade the presentation of any petition to God or man, except the king, for thirty days. To this decree Darius appended his sign. This was his first famous measure. Daniel was hopelessly entangled. Escape, even if desired, was impossible apart from the betrayal of conscience and of God.

He saw the dilemma. He must either deny God, and thus escape the lions' den, or else continue true to God, and lose his life. The happy result- one which brought such a revenue of glory to God, and such honor to Daniel- was that in faith he chose the latter. "Them that honor Me I will honor" was fully proved by this dear faithful man.

Meanwhile he was to make no petition to God for thirty days. Such was the clear command of Darius. Obedience was impossible. He must obey God rather. And so at all risk, without reserve, and most boldly, he prayed "as aforesaid." With his window open and with his face toward Jerusalem- that earthly center of divine interest, though at that time in ruins- he cried to God. Jerusalem was more to him than Babylon, and God more than Darius. "This is the victory that

overcometh the world, even our faith," and a praying Daniel was a victor.

Yet to his foes such conduct must have appeared folly. Think of petitioning an unseen God; think of turning toward Jerusalem while so doing—a ruin which bore witness to the wrath of that God on His people—and think of disobeying the king's decree. However, folly or wisdom, they had gained their end and had entrapped Daniel. They could now prove a charge of disobedience, and claim for him the punishment of the law.

Accordingly we find them at once preferring their charge, and telling the king of that Daniel, a Jewish captive, who did not regard the king or his decree, but who made thrice daily his petition. How skillfully had they framed their indictment! Here was a man who neither regarded the king nor his decree. Was this a fair presentment of the facts? Further, thrice daily he made his petition. True; but to whom? They did not say. How could they utter the name of the unseen God in whose awful presence Daniel found his strength and comfort? Yet the indictment was complete, and Daniel's ways had a semblance of disregard for the king. A way of escape was impossible.

And now Darius discovered, when too late, the faultiness of his measure; and in order to deliver his favorite minister, he labored till sundown, but in vain. His was the labor of mercy against the iron claims of justice, of love against law. Evidently both could not stand. If he delivered Daniel, he broke the law and dissolved the bonds of his empire; if, on the other hand, he fulfilled the law, he must shock all his feelings of mercy and compassion. There was no alternative. Hence his long and futile labor. Justice barred benevolence and demanded satisfaction. She refused the smallest violation; and urged, by the law of the Medes and Persians, by the very pillars that support the universe, the priority of her cause. And she prevailed. She must prevail.

Oh, that problem so insoluble to the brain of man! How can mercy find scope for acting without infringing the rules of justice? What infidel can answer such a question? or what system of philosophy can explain its riddle? But God has explained the whole in one single sentence—"That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. The cross of Christ stands before the world as the divine answer; for there justice, finding perfect satisfaction in the death of the Son of God, permits mercy to extend all the riches of her bosom toward the guilty; and thus the two, working hand in hand, carry the blessing in love, and secure it in righteousness on behalf of all who believe in Jesus.

Oh, grand solution of our problem, to be admired through the eternal day as the triumph not only of God's grace, but of His wisdom, too!

Well, the law of the Mede must have its way, and Daniel suffers its full penalty. He is cast into the den of lions. The law demands no more. The curtain drops, and night falls over the scene. But the king cannot sleep, nor do the sweet strains of music charm him. His soul is troubled on Daniel's account. And so early morning finds him at the mouth of the den crying lamentably to Daniel, whom he calls the servant of the living God, in order to learn whether God had been able to deliver him from the lions.

"O king, live forever," sounded loyally and joyfully from the lips of the man of God. "My God," said he, using the possessive pronoun by a renewed right and title, "sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." Yes, God was able to deliver, and had done so.

"Then was the king exceeding glad for him.... So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." Happy testimony! Daniel honored God, and God honored Daniel. No hurt befell his three friends in the burning fiery furnace. They had refused to worship the image. No hurt befell Daniel. He had refused to cease worshipping God. Their conduct was negative; his was positive. They said, "No"; he said, "Yes." Both responded by grace. And faith, like a golden coin, has two sides; the negative that refuses evil, and the positive that chooses good. Thus Moses refused Egypt, and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. It is the nature of faith to cease doing evil and to learn to do well.

"Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast forever." This was his second measure. It wiped the first out of existence. It established, as far as a human decree could do it, a religion that acknowledged the living God before whom men were to tremble and fear; and it was published in every realm of his wide domain.

Just think, dear reader, that this was the effect of the faith and devotedness of one man. Think of the glory that redounded to God through him. Daniel loved God, loved His interests, loved His people, loved His poor desolate city; and therefore, at all risk, and at all cost, he clung to Him. The ordeal was terrible, but the grace-given victory was glorious! Happy Daniel! Oh, for grace to cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord, and to continue in prayer to God as our hearts turn in true sympathy to the moral wastes of Zion, and await the coming of the great Deliverer-the Son of the living God.

Descending Love

My conscience may deal with my experiences, and I may be humbled by the character and measure of them, but my faith deals with God and His wondrous revelations. If, for instance, I have but little delight in the sense of His everlasting love to me, it should humble me; but then faith receives the fact of my Father's delight in these same thoughts of everlasting love, and I have "joy and peace in believing." There is music in heaven over the repentant sinner, and the little tiny pleasure that we, once repentant sinners, may have in God's love to us is but the echo of that music, and often a very faint and distant echo. But we must not be hanging over the echo, grieving and moaning because it is so faint and indistinct, but rather with free and happy thoughts be led from this poor and distant joy in our own hearts to the rich and full delight of that heaven where the Father's love, in spirit, brings us.

So in everything, let faith be in exercise; let faith, as another instance of its way, know and allow that the ascending love is never equal to the descending. A child never loves a parent with the same intenseness that a parent loves a child; and, more than this, the parent is very satisfied to have it so. And thus with our heavenly Father. He cannot be indifferent to the state of our affections toward Him, but still He understands that His love never can and never will receive its full answer from us. And He is more than satisfied to have it so. He is in the highest place Himself, and the descending affections flow more largely, and with a richer and a more generous tide than the ascending. With all this then, faith deals; it takes up God's delight in His own thoughts and counsels about us-it trusts the reality and the fervency and the unrepentancy of His love, and learns that no counsels or plans of glory and of joy are too magnificent for such love.

Dividing Asunder

"The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12.

God has created natural affections, but how much self and idolatry come in! Self-will, too, and self-gratification-how awfully it comes in! That is soul, and not spirit. The Word of God comes in and knows how to divide between soul and spirit, what looks like the same thing, the very same affections, as far as man sees. What a mass of corruption! Can we have communion with God when self comes in? How powerless Christians are now-you, I, and everyone. There is grace, blessed be God, but in a certain sense, how low we are! "We will give ourselves... to prayer," said some. All blessing comes from the immediateness of a man's life with God. There are rivers of living water. How are you to get them? "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink," and "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." A man must drink for himself first before there can be rivers, etc. In the time of the prophets they had a message, "Thus saith the Lord," and then they had to inquire the meaning of the prophecy; but with us, we ourselves drink first. We are so connected with Christ that we have it ourselves from Him before communicating it to others.

Do All

"Would you not recommend young Christians to do something for the Lord?" was the question asked of an old preacher.

"No, I would not," was the unexpected reply. "Then what would you do?"

"I would recommend them to do all things for the Lord."

Well it is for all Christians, young and old, to keep their Lord and Master ever in view, and to do everything for Him.

"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3:17.

Do We Trace Things to the Hand of God and Go No Further?

I trust I may never forget one lesson I learned some years ago concerning God who takes to Himself (and Oh, how rightly) the title of "The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort"-the God who comforts those that be in tribulation, not only that they may be comforted themselves, but that they may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God. I jot it down, hoping that it may be used to help and comfort others.

Many years ago, and not long before being called to pass through a very heavy trial and sorrow, I went up to London (England). While there I went one evening to a Bible reading. During the meeting the old brother in whose house the meeting was held, made the following remark: "We often speak of tracing things up to the Lord's hand, but do we give His heart credit for moving His hand." I was much struck by the remark at the time (little knowing what was before me) and my mind reverted to it occasionally, and I saw that the hand was but the servant of the heart, even in ordinary things. For instance, if a thief steals anything, the heart has first coveted it, and the hand is merely the agent that appropriates what the heart longs for. Well, I returned to my home, and about six weeks after, one very dear to me was taken rather suddenly. In my sorrow (and deep it was) the above mentioned remark came before me. Others spoke about so-and-so having been the means of bringing the infection, etc. But to me (and I thank God for the grace given) there were no second causes to be looked at. No, to God Himself I must trace it, and not to His hand only, but to His heart. What, His heart? Yes, the same heart that gave Jesus. Oh, the exquisite sweetness and infinite preciousness of the thought was inexpressible! And I knew what it was to have God Himself wiping away the tears from my eyes.

Another incident comes before me. A young sister in the Lord had just lost her babe, her firstborn, and was in deep grief. An old brother who knew her well wrote to her. In the letter was the following (as nearly as I can call to mind): "May you know the joy of having Jesus wipe away the tears from your eyes, and know that it is more blessed to have Him wipe away your tears than to have no tears to wipe away."

In conclusion I would add that I have found in my own experience the truth of what I once heard another say, "There is no bitterness, even in the deepest sorrow, unless the will is at work. It is the working of the will that brings the bitterness."

Doctrine and Practice

Does the reader happen to be familiar with Paul's epistle to the Ephesians? If so, he will know what great and grand truths are unfolded there. Some of our fellow believers dwell largely on what they term the heavenly side of Christianity and speak much of the Ephesian epistle..They could not do better, for a richer field it would be hard to find in the whole realm of Revelation.

It is well, however, to remember that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. There is danger in confining our thoughts to one particular portion of the sacred Word. Sheep must have change of pasture if they are to thrive. But in Ephesians the saints are seen in the highest circles of blessing. Their blessing, too, is presented not so much in connection with the meeting of their need as with the opening out of God's gracious purposes formed in the council chamber of eternity before time began. This is plainly shown in its earliest verses. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, before the universe was framed by the command of the Almighty, before the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, the saints were chosen in Christ that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. 1:4).

I emphasize those words "in Christ." They show us that the first man, Adam, set up in Eden, was not the center of God's counsels. He was not the pivot on which the whole revolved. "The second Man" was that. In Him we were chosen; in Him we are blessed with every spiritual blessing. Moreover, a son's place before the Father is what divine love designed for us. The saints are nearer than the angels. They stand in a relationship unknown to those unselfish, sinless beings who in these gracious ways of God behold His manifold wisdom, and rejoice. Accepted in the Beloved, they are heirs, too, with Him who is the Heir, destined to share His glory in the day of glory that is coming; and meanwhile the Holy Spirit is given as the earnest of what they shall inherit when Christ takes possession of that which is His. Ah, how easy it is to speak of these things! But how feeble is our grasp of them, and how little do we apprehend that eternal weight of glory which they reveal!

As far as the first chapter of the epistle is concerned, there is nothing to show the condition of those on whom such immeasurable blessing is conferred. The 7th verse does indeed speak of redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; but apart from that there is not a word to indicate whether the beings thus blessed are fallen or unfallen. In the 2nd chapter the truth is disclosed. They were dead in trespasses and sins-children of wrath. In those deep dark depths God has sought and found the objects of His mercy. These He quickens together with Christ, raises up, and makes to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Thus He makes known the exceeding riches of His grace now, even as this grace shall be still more gloriously displayed in ages to come, when the saints appear in the same glory with Christ. Who could work in this dark sphere where death held sway save God alone? Therefore it is said, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." v. 10. And if the believer has been taken out of such an abyss, it is all of pure, free grace; for how can we speak of meritorious works, or any goodness whatsoever, in connection with men dead in sins?

But it was not to dwell on this side of Ephesian truth that we took up our pen to write. Other and abler hands have dealt with these exalted themes, and what they have written is within the reach of all. A word of caution, however, we would utter against the tendency to overlook those parts of this epistle in which the Spirit of God warns against positive sins. How rarely are these warnings the subject of discourse. One might almost ask whether "the flesh" no longer exists in the Christian, and whether sin, the world, and the devil have changed their character so that the plain words of the Apostle are no longer needed.

There is a disposition to suppose that the ministration of heavenly truth is all that is required to preserve the saints from evil. Were this so, the epistle might have ended in the middle of chapter 4. But it did not end there. That such a ministry is to be cherished, we own with all our heart. Possibly no servant of Christ exercised it more than the Apostle Paul. Yet in this epistle where heavenly things have so large a place, he speaks of sins with a bluntness that might offend fastidious ears. A plain-speaking man was Paul. When he had anything to say, he said it, and did not hide his meaning in a multitude of words. He loved the saints, the honor of Christ was dear to him, and he was not ignorant of Satan's devices. He saw the possibility of being occupied with deep things in a mere mental way, to the neglect even of common morality—heavenly truth on the lips, and the feet in mire and dirt. Therefore he exhorts them not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God whereby they were sealed unto the day of redemption; and he affectionately entreats them to be imitators of God as dear children, and to walk in love. Moreover, he bids them give no place to the devil, and to shun everything of the nature of a lie, both in word and in way. Nor does he withhold the most solemn warnings against the committal of sins, the mention of which among the saints would be to their deep disgrace.

We want a little more of this practical Christianity nowadays—a working into the warp and woof of everyday life the holy precepts which in the Ephesian epistle follow hard on the heels of heavenly doctrine. The devil will divorce them if he can in the thoughts and lives of the saints. "High talk and low walk" is likely, alas! to pass into a proverb. It is the outcome of intellectualism in the things of God. If truth is to profit, it must reach us through the avenue of the conscience, as we have often been told; and when it does, the whole man is laid under the power of it. Nothing is easier than to gain an intellectual acquaintance with the profoundest doctrines of Scripture, and to acquire the habit of talking about them with the greatest fluency; but from beginning to end it shall be a mere mental exercise, and nothing more. The individual most proficient in this fatal art is not necessarily a hypocrite; but what he has learned has either not been learned with God, or it is not held in faith.

Something more than intelligence is needed, dear Christian reader. We need piety, the unworldly walk, the fear of God, the abhorrence of evil, the scorning to do a mean act, the tender and uncondemning conscience, the guarded lip that will refuse to utter what is false. What is this but the precious fruit of the Spirit and of that divine charity without which we are nothing, though we understand all mysteries? Let this be lacking and, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, we are but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

By all means study the deep things of God; but beware of intellectualism, and keep your imagination well in check. Think soberly. Search into the things which "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," and which are now revealed unto us in the Holy Scriptures. Untold blessing may

flow into your soul in the doing of it. Only see that your Christianity consists not in high-blown theories. Let it be practical. Read Eph. 1; 2, and 3 as often as you like; but also read chapters 4, 5, and 6. And remember that Paul, who certainly was no theorist, and who lived in the power of what he taught, exercised himself "to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." Acts 24:16. May we be followers of Him even as he was of Christ.

Earthly Joy

All Scripture shows us that perfect, earthly joy cannot be had here, or in the circumstances and history of the world, in their present state, nor till the earth is made the scene of righteousness; and such it is not to be till the Lord has taken from it all that offends, and all that does iniquity. The sword of judgment must go before the throne of glory. The earth must be cleared of its corruptions ere it can be a garden of holy, divine delights again.

The gospel is not producing a happy world, or spreading out a garden of Eden. It proposes no such thing but to take out of the world a people, a heavenly people, for Christ. But the presence of the Lord will make a happy world by-and-by, when that presence can righteously return to it.

Earthly or Heavenly?

There are abundant passages to prove that the Church is heavenly, both as to life, hope, and possession. Let us look at a few of them.

The Lord says in John 3:12, 13, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." The eternal life is heavenly in its nature. Again in verse 31, "He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all." So far we have a heavenly life on the earth; and in chapter 14, the Lord tells His own that He goes to prepare a place for them. "In My Father's house are many mansions:... I go to prepare a place for you.... I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Here we have a heavenly life, and a place prepared for us in heaven.

In 1 Pet. 1 we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." This was now the hope of the Israel of God. They were looking for heaven now, as their fathers had looked for Canaan. Their prospects were connected with heaven, and not with earth. Here they suffered, and they were not to think it strange, the fiery trial that was to try them, as if some strange thing had happened to them.

Paul, in writing to the Colossians, prays for them touching "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven"; while he warns the Hebrews of the "day of provocation," lest there should be in any of them an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. They were partakers of the heavenly calling, and their danger or snare was that they would sink to the old earthly standing in which Israel had been, and which Christendom to its loss and confusion has adopted. These Hebrews had already proved the practical power of the heavenly hope. "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The food of heaven was known to them on earth, like the grapes of Eshcol, before they got there.

In Col. 3 we are told to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth." And again, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Finally, in Ephesians, we are not only "blessed... with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," but we, His body, are raised up and made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Thus there can be no question but that the saints are heavenly in life, with a heavenly destination, and even now, blessed and seated in heavenly places in spirit. If the earthly be condemned, nothing remains but the heavenly. Even James refuses the earthly, and connects it with "sensual and devilish." In one sentence Paul determines the matter, "as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

Now it is not a mere contention whether we are an earthly people now, or a heavenly people, but it is of deepest importance to ascertain and to adhere to the character of our calling. Ignorance or indifference as to this great truth has been a bitter loss to souls individually, and has obstructed the testimony committed to us.

In the gospels, how carefully our Lord sets forth that His work was not only to deliver from human --, misery, but that He might give heavenly joy in the very spot where the misery is. The teaching of Luke 14-the great supper-sets this forth, and contrasts heavenly joys with human joys. It is not that land, or oxen, or a wife are sinful, but they are earthly, and not the joys proper to the gospel. The fatted calf is peculiarly heavenly, and belongs to the Father's house. The ransomed soul is brought to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The soul that is filled with the earthly thing has no taste for the heavenly. "The full soul loatheth a honeycomb." Surely we all know if we study our own history, that while there has been much exercise of soul to reach the joy of salvation, which is called peace, there has not been persistent seeking for, or sole expectation of, heavenly joys, or feasting on the fatted calf, while we journey here. How little has even the mature believer grasped that the condition on earth of the saved soul is that he should "never thirst," that there should be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life. A perfect redemption through the blood of Christ, and an unclouded assurance of eternal acceptance are, thank God, enjoyed by many; but how many can say that they are in such practical enjoyment of this heavenly gift that they never thirst? and that they are so replete with it that out of them flow rivers of living water?

If the Christian has been reared up wrongly, if he has grown up undirected, and untaught to joy in God, he is quite unprepared for the Church's portion in heavenly places. If he has never heard that the "fatted calf," the joys of the Father's house, are his present portion, made known to him by the Spirit come down from heaven, how can he desire to rise up to heavenly places, where Christ is, and enjoy them there as his right? If I do not know the taste of the grapes of Eshcol before I enter Canaan, I cannot long to be in the land, that I may eat them where they grow. We may well wonder, as we learn God's calling for the Church, that so few really enjoy the position of being united to Christ; that so few are in the enjoyment of being over Jordan, after the experience of Gilgal; remembering Christ in His death, in spirit in the full efficacy of His accomplished work; and then feeding on Himself in glory-the corn of the land.

Now one way to account for this great lack is that there has been a defect in the Christian education and calling from the beginning. God's thought even as set forth in type, was never merely to deliver His people from misery, or to find them a home in the scene of their former misery, but to translate them into the blessings of another place, as it is written, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Exod. 3:8. The hankering that Israel had after Egypt, and their reluctance to enter into Canaan, lamentably depict the career of saints today. The consequence of this ignorance of unbelief, as observed, is twofold: first, an immense loss to the individual soul; and second, a complete barrier to the understanding of our corporate position and testimony.

It is an immense loss to the believer if he has not learned that not only has the work of Christ delivered him from the misery in which sin has plunged him, but that now through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, he has "joy unspeakable and full of glory"; for if he does not know this

latter part, he is drawn away by the attractions of this present life. Hence the word even to "young men" who are "strong" is "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In ignorance of the portion that has been given him, he hews out to himself cisterns that hold no water; he compasses himself with sparks of his own kindling; his righteous soul is often vexed, and everything is disappointing to him, for he has been looking in the wrong place for his happiness.

But this is not all. How can the saint who is seeking his pleasure in earthly favors, even of the best kind which nature, art, or science can produce, apprehend the mystery of God-the Church-the body of a risen Head in heaven? How can one who has not turned to heaven as the sphere of his own joys, be prepared for the truth that he is one of a company united to Christ in heaven, raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ? The doctrine of the Church as a heavenly company representing Christ here on earth, is perfectly inscrutable to him. He has been looking for manifestation of divine favor on the earth; hence, though he has heard and read of the Church, he regards it only in its earthly aspect. He has not known it as united to Christ, in the region where nothing could interfere with it. I may believe that the Holy Ghost is here, and that He dwells in me, and that He forms the body; but if I do not see and enjoy the fact that I am raised in company with all saints to the place where He is, I have no assured sense of union either with Him or with all saints; and the Church is to me really an earthly thing, and not a heavenly, sent by Christ into the world.

In conclusion; it is impossible for anyone who is not heavenly in taste, association and hope, to comprehend the Church as the body of Christ.

There is union to begin with, but it is union in resurrection; hence the first action of one holding the Head is, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Many a one through grace, enters into the gospel as delivering him from his misery as man on the earth, and assuring him of an eternal home in heaven, who cannot grasp the Church in its real character; because, though on earth, it is of a heavenly order.

There is much accepted and owned in this day of the Spirit's presence and indwelling; hence, it is necessary to insist that He does not lead to earthly joys. He leads to and imparts heavenly ones, and when the heart of the believer goes after natural gratification, "a strange god," he is hindered and checked. It is not that He would lead us to despise or disregard the comforts which our Father's care so continually provides for us in our path here; and He is ever ready to succor, and to console, and to help us in our infirmities; but while most effectually strengthening with all power according to the might of His glory unto all patience, He would satisfy our hearts with heavenly joys, so that even if we were deprived of all the comforts here, we should still have "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Eternal Sonship

Though what is called "The eternal Sonship" is a vital truth (or we lose the Father's sending the Son, and the Son's creating, and we have no Father if we have no Son, so that it lies at the basis of all truth), yet in the historical presentation of Christianity the Son is always presented as down here in servant and manhood estate, as all through John, though in heaven and one with the Father. "This"-this Person-"is My beloved Son"-He who was as man here, yet there. In Matt. 3 the whole Trinity is revealed, and we may say for the first time fully, "Wonderful grace it is!"

Everlasting Love

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

Believer, art thou now tempted to doubt His love? Are His footsteps lost amid the night shadows, through which He is now conducting thee? What appears to thee now some capricious exercise of His power or sovereignty is the determination and decree of everlasting love. He seems to say, "I loved thee, suffering one, into this affliction; I will love thee through it, and when My designs regarding thee are completed, I will show that the love which is from everlasting, is to everlasting."

Child of God! If there be a ripple now agitating the surface of the stream, trace it up to this fountain-head of love.

Examples of Devotedness

The darker and more cloudy the day, the brighter do the acts of faith and love shine out, even as the dark background of a picture throws the brighter colors into bolder relief. The history of David abounds with such scenes. What makes many of them all the more striking and touching is the love and devotedness seen on the part of strangers. They shine like so many gems, sparkling and brilliant in their moral beauty.

Take, for instance, that lovely picture in 2 Sam. 15:13-23, and gaze upon the love of the Gittite stranger and exile, Ittai—a love which carried him in the path of a rejected David to share his sorrows and his trials. It is a beautiful and touching picture. Would that we had more living examples of it. The chance was given him to return, with the king's goodwill and favor, if he would have taken it. But no; it was not the king's goodwill or mere favor he desired; it was himself, and his heart could alone be satisfied in the company of David, whether in life or in death.

Jesus said, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be." John 12:26. And in Paul we see another Ittai—a devoted follower whose whole desire was to be in the path of the One who was not merely his Master, but also the engrossing object of his affections, and thus glorify Him in his body, whether by life or by death (Phil. 1:20). These men, in their devoted lives to David and David's Lord, do indeed provoke us "to love and good works" (Heb. 10:24).

Look at another picture, in 2 Sam. 17:27-29. See those strangers thinking of the needs of David and his men in the wilderness, and putting their thoughts into deeds. Oh, how much is lost to the dear saints of God through allowing their thoughts of love and kindness to rush from their minds almost as quickly as they entered, instead of seizing on the thought and giving shape to it by action.

What a contrast this Shobi, the Ammonite, presents to his brother Hanun in chapter 10:1-19. Machir too, of Lo-debar, who had sheltered Mephibosheth and his nurse, now comes forward to nourish David and his men. Barzillai, the Gileadite, likewise comes at this opportune moment. All of them brought of their substance for the hungry, weary, and thirsty people in the wilderness. What a cheer to David! How affecting to find such true affection, and at such a time!

Are not these dark days, and is not the true David rejected? And what innumerable opportunities there are to show forth our love and devotion to Him who has loved us and given Himself for us!

Think how such actions affect the heart of the blessed Lord. What is it to Him to see a soul in sympathy with His thoughts and heart, like these strangers with David? Surely it is as precious ointment, the odor of which fills the house, and the record of which shall never be hushed. It is the -Marys who minister to His heart that shall never be forgotten; or the devoted women "which Ministered unto Him of their substance" (Luke 8:3). Is this nothing to Him? Or a Gaius, well-beloved, whose house was a refuge for those who went forth to serve Him, taking nothing of the Gentiles (3 John 1:7). Is this nothing? Rest assured, all this is remembered by the true David

and shall have its place and reward when He recounts His worthies and their deeds. (2 Sam. 23:8-39; Rom. 16:1-16.) What a picture gallery is God's Word! It amply repays the student who will walk through with his Master, and examine, by the Holy Spirit's light and teaching, those beautiful characters whose portraits He has been pleased to give for our instruction and present for our contemplation, that we might be imbued with their spirit, and imitate their faith, love, and devotedness.

Four Wise Things on the Earth

Pro. 30:24-28

"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."

In these verses we get many of the principles of faith. We see it first in the ant who, though she is not strong, prepares her food in the summer. Faith always looks to the future, and gives up present enjoyment for future blessing. The ant may be considered a mean, laborious creature, while it is preparing its food, and others are enjoying themselves in the summertime; but it reaps the reward of its toil in the winter when its storehouse is full, and others are wanting food. Thus the saint is despised and rejected now, but he will soon enjoy happiness when those who are now happy will be miserable. In the conies we see a picture of the Christian, feeble and unable to defend himself, but strong in the Lord, his ROCK. Away from Christ he is nothing, but in Him he is strong and invincible amid all the attacks of the enemy. Christ is our Rock, our Fortress, our God, our Strength, our Buckler, and the Horn of our salvation (Psalm 18:2). "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands." This gives us a beautiful picture of the love and harmony that ought to exist between Christians; though they have no visible head, yet should they show the influence of their Head in the order and unity manifested in their assemblies. Though the locusts have no king, yet there is not the slightest disorder in their bands; all is closely compacted together; all is harmony and order. In systems of men's devising, there is always some head set up, and the worldling will mock those who have no head, because he would say, "There can be no order or regularity where there is no head." But though the worldling know it not, Christians have a Head, who by the leading of the Holy Ghost presides in their assemblies.

"The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." Here again we see another picture of the Christian, disagreeable and contemptible in himself, yet he has access into the holiest. Mark the ambition of the spider; it is not in the lowest corner only that the spider is to be seen, but even on the golden cornice and the marble stone.

Thus let it be with the saint, endeavoring individually to be like the ant, providing for the future (Matt. 6:19-21); like the coney, trusting not in himself, but in the Lord his Rock; collectively, like the locusts in love and harmony; and like the spider, having boldness to enter into the holiest.

Frankincense

"And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord." Lev. 2:2

The perfection of Christ in all His path was that He never did anything to be seen of men; it all went entirely up to God. The savor of it was sweet to the priests, but it all was addressed to God. Serving man, the Holy Spirit was in all His ways, but all the effect of the grace thus was in Him, was in His own mind, always toward God; even if for man, it was to God. And so with us; nothing should come in, as motive, except what is to God.

We see in Eph. 4:32 and 5:1 and 2, the grace toward man, and the perfection of man toward God as the object. "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children" (J.N.D. Trans.). In all our service as following Christ here, we get these two principles: our affections toward God and our Father, and the operation of His love in our hearts toward those in need. The more wretched the object of service in the latter case, the truer the love, and the more simply the motive is to God. We may love up and love down; and the more wretched and unworthy the persons are for whom I lay myself out for blessing, the more grace there is in it. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8. But while that is true, yet as to the state of my heart, the higher the object, the more elevated the affection. With Christ it was perfect. How can a poor creature like me be an imitator of God? Was not Christ an example-God seen in a man? And we are to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." He gave Himself for us, but to God; it was God's grace toward poor wretched sinners.

If we look at ourselves, we shall soon see how motives get mixed up and things come in, even where there is right, truehearted purpose; and that is where we have to watch. In Christ all was perfect; all, every bit of it, as to spring and motive, was for God's glory in this world-no thought of men, as to pleasing them, but that singleness of eye which looked to God alone, though full of kindness to man-loving down in that sense, but ever looking up, with His God and Father before His eye, which made Him perfect in everything. He was, of course, perfect-could not be anything else.

Now it is not that the priests could not smell the sweet savor, but it was not offered to them; it was all burned to God. As regards His own path, there was not a feeling that was not entirely up to God-for us, but to God. It was that which was perfectly acceptable to God.

Friends

We come to God first as beggars or not at all, but, once inside, God can tell us things that do not concern us. God deigns to call us friends, and I do not only go to my friend to talk to him about business, but to tell him what I have in my heart, even if it does not concern him at all. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" "I have called you friends."

It is not a matter of indifference to be treated by God as His friends; but we must be in the place first; when there, the Christian's heart gets an occupation that makes him grow. Our hearts need something to think of. Not only is our salvation settled, but God introduces us into a new world where our heart is opened and enlarged by occupation with Himself until it can take in His thoughts.

Gilgal

The power of resurrection life takes all strength from Satan: "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18. In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy, and the creature has no strength against him, even though it should not be drawn into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But, if this be true, it is also necessary to realize it practically. "Ye are dead.... Mortify therefore." This is what Gilgal means.

God and Man

If I have not reached my moral end in the cross of Christ, I have never got rid of self. You may try, try, try to get rid of it, but you never will, and Satan will only laugh at you. There is no end for self but in the cross. There God is before me-God manifest in flesh-God revealed in a man down here that I may look at Him. If He had not been a man, He could not have been manifested that we might see Him; and if He had not been God, He could not have spanned the distance that lay between us and God. But having become man without ceasing to be God, in order to do both, He who once measured our distance on the cross, now measures our nearness in the glory. Thus self is gone. It does not cease to exist, but it is gone as to occupation with itself. If it intrudes, it will but detach you from the One who, having won your affections, is the only Object that can fully satisfy the tastes and desires of your new affections.

God Is My Father

He is almighty in power.

He is perfect in His ways.

He is the God of all grace.

He is light-sees all things.

He is love-loves, because He is love.

He has understanding of all things.

He rules all things in perfect wisdom.

Love is the spring of all His ways-wisdom, the course they pursue-no power can stay His hand-thus all things work together for good, and all things are ordered with that end in view.

Hallelujah!

Peace, peace, perfect peace, since such a God is mine.

H.E.H.

God's Mighty Men of Valor: Lessons From Gideon

Judg. 6-8

The history of Gideon is of much practical importance. It is the history of one of those revivals in Judges so peculiarly applicable to the present circumstances and need of the Church.

From time to time Israel had been sold into the hands of their enemies. Groaning under the consequences of their sin, they had cried unto the Lord; and the Lord, ever faithful, had raised up someone as a deliverer out of the hands of those that spoiled them. He was grieved for the afflictions of His people, He judged their sin and evil, yet, at the same time, pity and saved. But then the persons by whom He wrought were always in themselves insignificant.

"The children of Israel," we read, "did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." Chapter 6:1.

The Midianites knew not that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel into their hands; yet, in reality, they were but the rod with which it pleased Him to punish His people.

"And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel." "And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." vv. 2, 6.

The Lord first sent a prophet who testified of their sin, and then raised up the instrument for their deliverance.

"And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." v. 11.

Not anything could have been more abject than the condition of Gideon as described here—stealthily threshing wheat (for fear of the Midianites) to feed his family! But here is one whom the Spirit of God delights to make mention of; whose name, unrecorded of man, is thought worthy to be recorded by Him (Heb. 11:32-34). The Spirit of God writes to magnify the grace of God, not to exalt man. He would have us bear in mind such little incidents as that noticed here in the history of the soldiers of faith, in order that we may see by what weak and insignificant instruments God works. His mightiest victories have ever been won by such, and not by those who had resources in themselves.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." v. 12. What a remarkable salutation! Stealthily threshing wheat to hide it from the enemy did not look like valor. But God's "mighty" men have ever been such as were cowards in themselves, men distrustful of their own strength and wisdom in coping with the enemy, men who "out of weakness were made strong." None are "mighty" men "of valor" but those to whom it has been said, "The Lord is with thee." When God calls a person by a name, He makes that person what the name imports; but He takes the most abject man of an abject tribe to make

him His "mighty man of valor." "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (see 1 Cor. 1:25-29). God works not ordinarily by such; the credit would then be given to our wisdom, our influence, and the like; and it is written, "No flesh" shall glory in His presence. He takes "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised,... yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are." If Timothy is exhorted to "fight the good fight of faith," it is as one "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

"And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?"

His heart has been touched and prepared of the Lord for the work to which he is called. He has a deep sense of the condition of Israel upon his soul, though he is without the power to help them; and he has been comparing that condition with the title and power of the Lord. This is the way of faith.

"And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

The Lord looked upon him. That is the first thing. The man who is really strong and mighty is he who has thus gotten into the secret of Israel's impoverishment. The Lord has looked upon him. The Lord has identified Himself with him, and shown His heart to be toward him. There is no limit to His might.

But does Gideon feel himself to be a strong man? No! never before had he so known his own weakness and insignificance; never had he so felt the poverty of his father's house as now.

"And he said unto Him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." v. 15.

Thus it is always with the soldiers of faith. They have never so felt their own weakness as when called to be God's mighty men of valor. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." We need to feel that we are weak; that brings in Omnipotence. We shall have a life of feeling by-and-by, in the glory; now we are called upon to lead a life of faith. What saint does not know from the experience of the deceitfulness of his own heart, that if we had power in ourselves instead of in Christ, we should be something? God does not intend us to be something in ourselves.

"Wherewith shall I save Israel?" His threshing instrument would have been a poor thing indeed to look at as that "wherewith" to go against the host of Midian. Never, we repeat, had he felt the poverty of his father's house as now. When God is about to use a man, he makes that man feel most consciously nothing in himself. If He delivers by Gideon's hand, He must have the glory, not Gideon; His must be the strength, not Gideon's. It is always as it should be when we realize our own nothingness. Strong in the Lord, we are weakest in ourselves. Can we not, almost invariably, trace our failures to self-confidence? When a believer thinks that he is going to do a feat, his failure often becomes ridiculous. God must abase that which is proud and lifted up.

As with David, in another fight of faith, there was no sword in the hand of Gideon-not anything "wherewith" to go against the Midianites. But what does that matter? "If God be for us, who can be

against us?" He does not go forth unarmed. "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Here then is the mighty man of valor, and here is his armor.

Gideon asks a sign: "And he said unto Him, If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then show me a sign that Thou talkest with me."

There is feebleness, doubtless, here; he ought to have had simple confidence, and not to have needed a sign; still, all he really cares for is having the Lord with him.

When Gideon's heart is reassured, he builds an altar there unto the Lord, and calls it "Jehovahshalom" (v. 24).

And now he is prepared for service. He has been under God's tutorage. He has learned where his strength is; he no longer says, "Wherewith shall I save Israel?" And the Lord has given him confidence to stand before Him. But where does He set him to work?-with the Midianites? No, not in the least. He has to begin the Lord's work at home with that which is nearest to himself.

"And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down." vv. 25, 26.

There judgment commences. We must "cease to do evil" before we "learn to do well." Obedience to God is the saint's rule and liberty. Not all the powers in the world have a title to interfere with this. And, moreover, if God says, Pull down the altar of Baal, He will give strength to do it.

"Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night." v. 27. He acts unhesitatingly. And what is the consequence? Immediate opposition.

The action of faith always excites the flesh. Israel knew not where their strength was; they thought it was in Baal. Gideon had learned it to be in God.

When we are mixed up with the world, Satan has no occasion to disturb us; let him be alarmed, and up come Midianites, Amalekites, etc. "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel." v. 33.

Here is Gideon with his own people against him, and the enemies of Israel gathered together and pitching in Jezreel. But he has peace with God, and the Lord is (so to speak) bound to appear on his side. How does he act? "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him." v. 34. Had Gideon been serving Baal, he could not have blown that trumpet. But Baal is down, and the altar of God is set up in the ordered place. He sends messengers throughout all Manasseh, who are also gathered unto him, and to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali.

But Gideon still has a further lesson to learn. (A lesson each of us must learn.) He has known the acceptance of his offering. The youngest of an idolatrous household, he has built an altar to the Lord, and begun to destroy idolatry. But he has yet to learn that there is not a bit more courage or prowess really in the men that had gathered after him than in himself.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." Chap. 7:2.

At once he has to get rid of a great number of them.

This is done, first of all, by means of an ancient ordinance of Moses. The Lord tells him, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand". and there remained ten thousand. v. 3.

To all appearances, Gideon was weakening his own hands. At the first proclamation twenty-two thousand left him; but in reality, instead of losing strength, he was gaining by their departure. These fearful and fainthearted ones would have discouraged the rest had they remained among them. "Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deut. 20:8). The flesh is very bold in word; but when it comes to the point of trial, with Peter it curses and swears that it knows not Jesus. "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63).

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go." v. 4.

There is such a thing as the trial of our faith; and while we would be quite unable to test one another, God knows the best way of testing each.

"So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knee? to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place." vv. 5-7. God's ways are strange to sense. The infidel scoffs at them. These who were sent home were really not afraid (as those who departed before) to go to the battle; they were all of them soldiers girded for war. The test was this: whether in that thirsty day they would lap the water, putting the hand to the mouth, or bow down and drink at their ease. The three hundred chosen ones (those by whom the Lord was about to work) had not time for halting; their hearts were in their work, and they merely took a drink as they went on their way.

The Apostle speaks of being entangled "with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. 2:4); all that we can safely take, if we would "please Him who hath chosen" us to be soldiers, is just a drink by the way. There is a very great difference between being in the circumstances of this life, and being entangled with them. When tested by the Lord, those who bowed down were not fit for His use any more than the faint-hearted. They must go to their homes.

Gideon (instructed that the battle is the Lord's, and that he must get rid of all encumbrances) is next shown his enemies. "And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand." v. 9. It is a blessed thing to be shown our enemies, and to be told with Gideon that the Lord has delivered them into our hands. Our old man is "crucified" (Rom. 6:6), the world "overcome" (John 16:33), and its prince "judged" (John 16:11). If we are walking by faith as risen with Christ, Satan, the world and the flesh are under our feet.

And mark further how graciously the Lord anticipated the need of His servant in adding, "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host." vv. 10, 11.

Let us follow Gideon. "Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host." vv. 11-14. Divine encouragement is never to the puffing up of the flesh. Anything of pride and self-importance must have been sorely wounded. When God will show His favored servant the things that are coming to pass, and that he shall smite the Midianites as one man, He makes him feel that (in himself) he is but a "cake of barley bread." And is there not instruction for ourselves in this? Were Christians stripped of their worldliness, and made more like the "cake of barley bread" (the most homely thing possible), the world would stand more in fear of them.

"And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped." Before he goes to battle, he worships in the full confidence of victory. The worship of faith is always the worship of confidence. Were we really in our own eyes the "cake of barley bread," there would be more abounding praise. "He... returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." v. 15.

What is this "host of Israel"? Three hundred men! The Midianites are as "grasshoppers for multitude"; the Lord's "host" but a handful of men! It is most important to see the dignity attached to the three hundred. And now comes the conflict: "And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said... when I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." vv. 16-18. The weapons of their warfare were the most foolish things imaginable-trumpets, pitchers and lamps in the pitchers! Faith's weapons must be mighty through God alone.

"So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp.. and they blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers that were in their hands... and held the lamps in their left hands:... and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon... And the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host." vv. 19-22. Our power is in giving testimony to Jesus, and never getting out of the place of being but "earthen vessels." We must

remember that the vessel only contains the light; let us not pretend that it is the light. The excellency of the power must be of God, not of us.

"And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them." Chap. 8:4. What three little words could be more blessedly descriptive of the Christian than these? not "faint" and sitting down; not "faint" and giving up; but "faint," yet pursuing. We have to do with Him who "giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." (Isa. 40:29). It is a blessed use to make of our faintness and weariness, that of drawing out the fullness of the supply of grace and strength in Christ. It is said, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might"; but to whom? To the one who has no strength in himself, who would give up his course if strength were not supplied to him.

We do not like the trial of faith. It is very painful, doubtless, to feel day after day our own weakness. We want to feel that the battle is over; but let us remember that now is our time of war. We are called on to fight as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and that in a daily round of conflicts. Today there has been sufficient grace and sufficient evil. What we need is to live day by day in reliance on God. He is faithful, and will supply strength according to the occasion and need. The Church will not be at rest till the Lord comes. But weakness ought to be no hindrance to our going forward-"faint, yet pursuing."

God's Training Ground

Every one of us is necessary to every one else. You say, "That brother is so bad"; but I say, "He is necessary to you." You say, "Oh! but he troubles me so much; there is this thing and that thing about him." Well, that is the very thing you need. Do you think that there is a single thing that happens that is not necessary to us? This world is God's training ground, and God sees to it that there is everything to exercise us, and even to rub us the wrong way, in order that He might have the opportunity to strengthen us and make us faithful.

The Gospel in the Psalms

The gospel is not the subject of the Psalm Still, in the Psalm we do find what constitutes the gospel; that is, we find Christ-"The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. 1:11); and it is with the thought of presenting Christ that we desire to take up certain psalms in a gospel way.

Let us begin with Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man." How sweetly the first word falls on the ear-"Blessed"! It is what God pronounces him to be who answers to the description given in this psalm. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night." What a beautiful life this is, both in its negative and its positive side!

My reader, can you claim blessing from God on the ground of answering to the description here? Have you never walked "in the counsel of the ungodly"? Have you never stood "in the way of sinners"? Have you never sat "in the seat of the scornful"? Have you delighted in the law of the Lord, and in His law meditated day and night? Let such questions be answered by you in the presence of God. No, your life and mine have been far otherwise. One Man, and one alone, could claim blessing from God on the ground of what He was. It is Jesus who fully answers to the picture-that unique and perfect Man over whom God could open the heavens and say, "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Surely He was that "tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." It is Jesus who was all that a man should be. His perfect life should convince us of sin.

We have all like lost sheep gone astray; He never did. And He could perfectly say, "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer." We have found pleasure in doing our own wills; He could say, I always do the things that please My Father (John 8:29).

But let us look now at Psalm 14:2: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." What did He see? "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." How emphatic and sweeping is this verse-"all" "all together," "none." No exception among all the children of men. May any unsaved reader be led to bow his heart here and say, "O God, I own that Thou hast in this scripture given me my moral photograph." This is repentance. God would convince the sinner of sin in order that he may take the place of self-judgment, and we know that He will never condemn those who condemn themselves. Psalm 1 then is Jesus, not I; Psalm 14 is I, not Jesus.

Now we come to Psalm 22: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest Me not; and in the night season, and am not silent." Well do we know who it is that was

thus abandoned of God. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Matt. 27:45, 46. The forsaken Man of Psalm 22 is Jesus the Son of God-the blessed, perfect Man of Psalm 1. Dear reader, ponder these words: "why," "Thou," "forsaken," "Me." And when no answer came, then from out of that awful solitude and from that heart came the answer which vindicated God in that forsaking: "But Thou art holy."

In 2 Cor. 5:21 we read; "For He hath made Him to be sin for us." "Made Him... sin" is the reason He was forsaken. A holy God forsook Him because He was made sin. But this same scripture testifies, He "knew no sin," for He was the perfect Man of Psalm 1. But here in Psalm 22 He, blessed be His name, takes the place of the "filthy" men of Psalm 14. None may know what it cost Him, and none can fathom that ocean of sorrow. There are other sorrows in this wonderful psalm-sorrows resulting from man's hatred-for poor, wretched man is there. "For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet." They can even gamble for His garments (v. 18). But the sorrows of verses 1 and 2 are atoning sorrows-it was what He endured at the hand of God as in Isa. 53:10. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." Oh, wondrous love to give His Son! Oh, infinite holiness that put Him to grief when made sin! Can we wonder at the streams of blessing flowing out from verse 22 right on to millennial scenes to all who trust Him? The bitter night of weeping is over in verse 21, inasmuch as He was heard and taken from the lowest point of death-"the horns of the unicorns"-after having met all the righteous claims of God, and Satan's power (see Heb. 2:14, 15). All-all was met there; and now joy, eternal joy, comes in the morning. It is the resurrection morning. All our blessings are secured in resurrection "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17.

How beautifully the psalm ends. Mark the closing sentence, "He hath done this." Let your eye rest upon it-"He hath done this." Now add believingly two other words-"for me"; or write your name in full at the bottom of that psalm.

"For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,

And I have died in Thee;

Thou'rt risen! my bands are all untied,

And now Thou liv'st in me.

The Father's face of radiant grace

Shines now in light on me."

Yes, you say, "for me"-for the "me" of Psalm 14.

Now turn to Psalm 32. Again we are greeted by that precious word "Blessed." "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Now this is true of you, dear reader, if you can write your name at the foot of Psalm 22. You are without doubt the blessed man of Psalm

32. God accounts you righteous-the God who "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:24, 25. It is not what we think, feel, or realize; but it is what God says in His Word. (Acts 13:38, 39; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.) So the sinless Man of Psalm 1 dies in Psalm 22 for the sinful men of Psalm 14, in order that the sinful men of Psalm 14 may be in the blessing of the man of Psalm 32.

It is interesting to note also that the 32nd Psalm is the first "Maschil" psalm (see heading of psalm). "Maschil" means "giving instruction." It is the first instruction God gives to men. May you, my reader, be thus instructed and blessed.

Now, the man who is thus blessed and instructed can now go back to Psalm 1 and seek to walk in the same path as this blessed One. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Who are the people of whom this is said? In chapter 1:9 we are told they had already received the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. And again in chapter 2:24: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." It is because they were forgiven, justified, saved, that thus they were exhorted. So in 1 John 2:6: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." But note a little lower down, in verse 12 he says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." They were in the blessing of Psalm 32. We must know Him as Savior before we can have Him as an example. We must be blessed before we can be exhorted how to walk. May it be our joy and blessing thus to walk.

"Till traveling days are done."

Grace Sufficient

To be anxious for souls and yet not impatient, to be patient and yet not indifferent, to bear the infirmities of the weak without fostering them, to testify against sin and unfaithfulness and the low standard of spiritual life, and yet to keep the stream of love free and full and open, to have the mind of a faithful, loving shepherd, a hopeful physician, a tender nurse, a skillful teacher, requires the continual renewal of the Lord's grace.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" "My grace is sufficient." (2 Cor. 2:16; 12:9.)

Guidance

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." Psalm 32:8, 9.

Now we are often like the horse, or mule, every one of us -and this because our souls have not been plowed up. When there is anything in which the will of man is at work, the Lord deals with us, as with the horse, or the mule, holding us in. When every part of the heart is in contact with Himself, He guides us with His "eye." "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no dark part, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." Luke 11:34-36.

When there is anything wherein the eye is not single, so long as this is the case, there is not free intercourse in heart and affections with God; and the consequence is, our will not being subdued, we are not simply of God. When the heart is in the right state, the whole body is "full of light," and there is quick perception of the will of God. He just teaches us by His "eye" all He wishes, and produces in us quickness of understanding in His fear! (Isa. 11:3). This is our portion, as having the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, quickness of understanding in the fear of Jehovah, hearts without any object save the will and glory of God. And that is just what Christ was: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." See Psalm 40:7, 8; Heb. 10:7. Where there is this, it may be bitter and painful as to the circumstances of the pathway, but there is in it the joy of obedience as obedience -God guiding us by His eye.... Many speak of providence as a guide. Providence does sometime control, but it never, properly speaking, guides us: it guides things. If I am going to a place to preach, and I find, when I get to the terminus, that the train has started, God has ordered things about me (and I may have to be thankful for the overruling); but it is not God's guiding me; for I should surely have gone had the train not left; my will was to go... but it is not guidance of the Spirit of God, not guidance by the "eye," but rather by the "bit" of God. Though providence overrules, it does not, properly speaking, guide.

A Happy Story and a Sad Story

During the past week two very different items of interest were brought to our attention. They were different in character and style, in the people concerned, and in the far-reaching results that will extend into eternity.

One was the case of a young mother who had many troubles in her family, and at times became quite despondent. In her distress she often turned to a Christian woman who was her neighbor, and from her received words of comfort and many exhibitions of practical Christianity.

The Christian neighbor welcomed the opportunity to lend a helping hand so that she might testify for the Lord Jesus in what He was to her, and be able to tell the needy one that she could have the same peace and joy through believing in Him. Time after time the gospel was presented to the one who had religion but not Christ, and many prayers went up on her behalf.

After a time the Christian woman moved to another city, but before doing so she gave a Bible to her neighbor and urged her to read it. Six long years went by before there was any evidence of bread being found after its having been cast upon the waters (Eccles. 11:1). Then a few weeks ago her Christian friend received a telephone call from the one whose salvation she longed after. She had come to the same city and soon called her friend and said:

"Oh, I found it; I've got it. The Lord Jesus died to put away my sins." This was a time of mutual rejoicing, and of praise to God who gave His only begotten Son that they might have eternal life through believing in Him and His finished work on the cross.

This little narrative should serve as an encouragement to us to witness for our Lord and Savior as we have opportunity. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Eccles. 11:6. Many have sowed the seed and never knew in this world that it had brought forth good fruit, but the day is coming when it will be declared. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." Isa. 32:20.

The other story is as sad as this one is happy, for it is the melancholy recital of the darkness of unbelief in a professed minister of the gospel.

A highly placed clergyman of the Church of England, William Ralph Inge, formerly Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, at the ripe age of 93, gave expression to the doubts and uncertainty of a man shrouded in the dismal hopelessness of those who reject the truth of God.

Think of a man who for many years took the place of being "a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness," saying at the end of life's journey: "I have tried to answer three problems which always seemed to me to be fundamental: the problem of eternity, the problem of human personality and the problem of evil. I have failed. I have solved none of them, and I know no more now than when I started." What a confession, "I have failed"! Failed in what? first, in fathoming eternity. What did he expect? he a creature of time and, comparatively speaking, only an

infinitesimal speck in the vast universe of God. The human mind cannot comprehend that which has no beginning and no ending, but God in His Word takes us back into the past and lets us know of that Son who was in the bosom of the Father in that distant, unknowable past. Then He brings us down to the creation, and tells us all that we need to know of how all came into being at His word. He also takes us forward into the eternity of the future, and shows us the blessed scene of bliss when God shall dwell with men (Rev. 21:3) in a state of permanent righteousness; and He faithfully tells us of the eternity of woe for those who reject the Christ of God. Is there room for any uncertainty here? None whatever except for those who refuse the testimony of God.

It is difficult to see why "human personality" should have been such a lifelong unproductive study. Is it not the aggregate of an individual's mental, moral, physical and emotional being which distinguishes him as an individual? These are generally inherited, but may be developed or altered by circumstances in life. It is certain that an unbeliever who finds Christ as his Savior and henceforth has a new life, with a pure object (Christ) before him, and a pure motive (to please Christ), will manifest some change in personality. The beloved, tenderhearted Apostle Paul certainly manifested a different personality from that displayed in the uncompromising foe of Christ, Saul of Tarsus.

The third thing that the great churchman failed to comprehend (sin), is fully stated in the Word of God-"sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4; J.N.D. Trans.; also 1885 Revised Version and others). It is the creature's exercise of his own will independently of God. Our first parents sinned in the Garden of Eden, and so have all their posterity from that day to this. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5:12. God has left us in no doubt as to what sin is, its origin, its dreadful consequences in death and ruin here. He shows us His own way to cleanse the guilty sinner righteously, of life and eternal felicity for those who believe in His Son, and the blackness of darkness forever and ever for those who reject or neglect His great salvation.

But Dean Inge did not stop there. He went on to say to his interrogator, "I know as much about the after life as you-nothing. I don't even know there is one-in the sense the church teaches it." Why does he not know? God has spoken in unmistakable language. It is self-evident that he does not believe God and His Word. The Lord Jesus met a similar class of clerics when He was on earth, and of them said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Matt. 11:25.

The dear young woman we have previously mentioned knows much more than the man who claims the title of "Very Reverend."

"I know... nothing... I don't know," is the language of unbelief, of the infidel. The language of faith is "I know," and "we know." Such is the portion of the simplest believer in the Lord Jesus. "We know that the Son of God is come." "We know that we are of God." "For 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.'" (1 John 5:19, 20 Cor. 5:1.) The Apostle Paul was certain of what lay ahead; he knew so well that he desired to depart and be with Christ, which he said was very much better. And when the end came he said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12.

Perhaps the greatest clue to the Dean's morass of uncertainty is this statement: "I have no vision of 'heaven' or a 'welcoming God'." I do not know what I shall find and I must wait and see." How similar this is to the utterance of the wicked servant who said, "I knew thee that thou art a hard man." This parable describes one who never knew the grace of God; one who never "tasted that the Lord is gracious." No one could know the grace of God and say, "I have no vision of a 'welcoming God'." Could he ever have read the 15th of Luke? Think of the welcome that the poor, wayward prodigal got! The father ran down the road to meet the one who had signally dishonored him. Oh! the manifold grace of God. Yet here is a blind leader of the blind who knows nothing of it. And he is only one of thousands upon thousands who preach to others and whose hearts are estranged from God.

An infidel said as he was about to pass from this world, "I am taking a leap in the dark," but here is a supposed minister of the gospel saying practically the same thing. Well did the Lord say: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness... How great is that darkness!" Matt. 6:22, 23. The eye is either single or evil. And if we do not have light from God, received through a single eye, then all we have is the light of nature, and in the fallen creature it is darkness. Man in his present state is away from God; he is darkness and is in darkness. No amount of culture, education, or even preparation for the ministry (as some call it), will change nature's darkness into light. It is only as we come by faith to God as sinners and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, that we can receive the true light.

In the first of these two cases we have mentioned there is the demonstration of the light of

God coming into a soul that takes God at His word, making it unspeakably happy. In the second there is one who knows theology and the outward form of religion, but has nothing more than the mere light of a fallen nature, and so is about to leave the world, in darkness, not knowing where he is going. "How great is that darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. 6:22,

Hardening the Heart

There are scriptures which contemplate a succession of eras or times all along the course of the earth's history, from the time of the flood, I may say, to the days of antichrist, when there has been or is to be a judicial visitation under the hand of God upon the hearts, understandings, and consciences of men. I might present the following instances:

The old Gentile world|Rom. 1:28.|

Pharaoh or Egypt |Exod. 10:21-26.|

The kings of Canaan|Josh. 11:20|

Israel|Isa. 6|

Christendom 2|Thessalonians 2.|

These scriptures show us this judicial hardening of which I am speaking; and they further show us that the fruit or character of this may be very startling, such as we could not easily have believed or feared.

Under it, men of refinement and intelligence may adopt all kinds of religious vanity; rulers and statesmen may be blinded to the plainest maxims of government. Did not Pharaoh persist in a course which, in the mouth of witness after witness, was sure to be the ruin of his kingdom? Did not the nations of Canaan tremble at the report of the conquests of Israel, and of what God had done for Israel? And yet, in spite of all that, did they not madly resist Israel (see Joshua)? And will not whole communities of intelligent, refined, advanced people, by-and-by bow to the claims of one who shows himself to be God, setting himself up above all that is worshiped?

Yes, even in our present day, worldly men violate the clearest and most sensible means of their own interests, and religious men depart from the simplest instructions of the truth. We are not to wonder at anything. The very idols which men have taken as spoils of war, they have afterward bowed down to as their gods (2 Chron. 25:14). For what folly, what incredible blindness of understanding will not the infatuated heart of man betray. But this judgment is never sent forth to visit man until he has righteously exposed himself to such judgment. All the cases show this. Pharaoh, for instance, had in deepest ingratitude forgotten Joseph. The Amorites of Canaan had filled up the measure of their sins. The old Gentiles had brought this reprobate mind on themselves (Rom. 1:28). Israel "had not," Jerusalem "would not." (Matt. 13:12; 23:37.) And the strong delusion is to be sent by-and-by, abroad upon Christendom, only because they "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

This hardening precedes destruction, but it comes after man has ripened his iniquity. God endures with all long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as He fashions by His Spirit His own elect vessels of mercy before He glorifies them. "Whom He will He hardens," surely is true; but He wills to show His wrath in this way, of hardening only in the case of those whom He has in

much long-suffering endured (Rom. 9:11-22).

Thus then we see there is such a process in the judgment of God as the hardening of the heart -that this is never executed till man has ripened himself in evil -and that the fruit of this may appear in such human folly and blindness that it is difficult to understand, or perhaps conceive.

Let this prepare us for things which not only may shortly come to pass, but which have already appeared. Men of learning and of taste, men of morals and religion, men of skill in the science of government, and whole nations famed for dignity and greatness, each in their generation may be turned to fables and to follies enough to shake the commonest understandings in ordinary times.

I do not say the "strong delusion," (2 Thess. 2:11), has gone forth; but there are symptoms and admonitions of its not being far off. What a voice this has for us, to keep near to the Lord in the assurance of His love, to love His truth, to walk immediately with Himself, and to promise ourselves that His tarrying is not long.

He Knows All

Every page in our heart is laid open under His eye. Does He read you, and occupy Himself with every thought and intent of your heart? Does He see all in you that is of the flesh judged? or does He see things germinating for self and for time? Ah! if He does read in us what is contrary to His mind, will He turn from us? No; but He will have us know what sort of people we are. He knows all our weakness, and we must know it too. If John is lying at His feet, it is indeed that He may say, I shall touch you and make you feel what My strength is, but you must feel your own weakness. All who know Christ have a deeper and deeper sense of that as they go on. But all the way through the wilderness we have Him for us, saying, You cannot take a step without Me, and I am going before you.

Oh, if the whole way, in all our circumstances down here, you and I were ever turning up to heaven, knowing that we might have all the sympathy of the heart of that living Christ there! He, a living man there, with a heart and mind that led Him to go into all His people's circumstances. Each individual believer, each in his own circumstances, commands His thoughts. He is able to be occupied with Stephen, Saul, Peter and James all at the same moment. Can you say, I do know the sympathy of the heart of Christ; I know how He picked me up and has held me ever since?

The only thing to keep us in the sense of our own entire failure, is to have the light of the eye of this blessed One shining into the heart, and exposing all that is contrary to His mind.

Never does the peace He gives so shine out as amid the tempestuous waters down here. He as my Peace comes in between me and all that gives me trouble, saying, Soon you shall come with Me to another place; you are not for earth, but for Me. He will call me by my name, and take me into glory.

The Holy Scriptures: Part 1

We may by a little consideration observe the value which God has set on the revelation He has, from time to time, been making of Himself and His will, and also our own title to the direct personal use of that revelation. And such truths are of serious and happy importance to our souls at all times, but in some sense especially now.

When the Lord God planted and furnished the garden, and set Adam in it, He made all to depend on His word or revelation; "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This was the revelation then; and man's history, as we know, was to hang entirely upon it. And thus, at the very outset, we see what a place of value the word which had gone out from the mouth of the Lord holds; and it became the direct object of the serpent's assault and enmity.

So, when the character of things had been changed through man's disobedience to this first word of God, all is made to depend on another word: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." Man's return to God now depended on his belief of this word, as his departure from God had afore hung on his disobedience to the first word. For all now rested on faith, or obedience to this revelation. Thus we find that Abel, by faith, offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. All service from man now rested on faith or obedience to the word or revelation of God (Heb. 11). So high was the value which the Lord put on His word, making it, as before, the standard and the test of obedience, and the hinge on which man's history was to turn. And Cain's offering was in unbelief, or in despite of God's word about the seed of the woman. He despised God's word, as the serpent had before assailed it. And so in process of time, in like manner, Noah and Abraham are called forth from a revolted world by revelations from God, and their acceptance of such revelations determines their path in present peace onward to glory.

But when we reach a larger scene for the energies and acts of God, as in the nation of Israel, we still find that all was made to turn upon the revelation He was giving His people. We read that they were neither to add to it or diminish from it (Deut. 4 and 12). Thus carefully did He hedge around it and jealously watch over it, that it might not be entangled with the thorns of the wilderness of worldly wisdom, or disturbed by the admixtures of men's thoughts. And having thus protected it, and provided for its purity, Jehovah ordered that His people should bind it around their heart and their soul, and fix it under their eye continually, inscribing it on their gates and doors, making it their morning and evening meditation and the theme of their family intercourse (Deut. 6 and 11), so that they should let it in, that it might mingle itself with all their personal and social life, and shed its light on every path, however ordinary, of their daily journey. And if any of them were put at a distance from the more immediate place of the nation and of their religious observances, still the word was to be their rule there (Josh. 22:4, 5). And if any of them were called into circumstances which might be extraordinary or unlooked for, the same word of God should follow them there; for if there were to be a king in days to come, the law of his God should go up to the throne with him, and be there before him as fully as he was before the people (Deut. 17). And the history of Israel

as a nation, like that of Adam in Eden and out of Eden, was to be determined by their use of God's word (Deut. 28).

What an expression of the value which the Lord set upon His word all this gives us! and with what jealousy does He watch it, that He may maintain it in its purity! and how immediately would He have it bound around the heart and soul of each of His people!

It is blessed to see the Lord thus esteeming His own revelation, and commending it to our esteem; and, as we go on in His ways, it is His Word we still find the Lord using and estimating. Israel was disobedient to the word of His law, and what He does is to send them the word of His prophets. If they refuse one testimony, it is only another they must get. God will still use His word, and still make their history to rest on their use or abuse of it. And therefore we find that their final dispersion and bondage in Babylon came of this, that when the Lord had even risen up early to send them His prophets, they did but despise those prophets, and the words which they brought; so that wrath came on them to the uttermost, and there was now no remedy (2 Chron. 36).

There is, however, a return to Jerusalem out of Babylon, and return to God then is marked very clearly by a return to His word. The captives are obedient to the word. Ezra, for instance, makes it his meditation, the theme of his intercourse with the people, and the rule of his ways and acts in the midst of them (chap. 7). So Nehemiah and his companions. They read it, they own the power of it over their consciences, and they set themselves to walk and act in the light of it (chaps. 8 and 13).

As long, or as far, as those returned Jews were obedient to God, so long, and so far, were they attentive to the voice of His truth, both trembling at and rejoicing in His word according to its spirit in addressing them. They had returned to God, and must therefore return to His word; and while this was so, blessing was theirs, and latter day blessing is made to depend on this also. (Mal. 4:5, 6).

When we open the New Testament, after all this, we find the word, or revelation of God, in this accustomed place of honor and value. It is put into the lips of the Baptist; no power lies in his hand, but the word of the Lord breaks from his lips. "John did no miracle," but he was a "voice" from God, acceptance of which was again to determine the history of Israel. So the Lord's own ministry, which this of John introduced, was not only a fresh ministry of God's Word (on the value of which I will not speak), but it did itself greatly honor the precious Word; and this still shows us what value in God's esteem His Word holds. Thus, in His acts, the Lord Jesus was ever fulfilling that Word, as the evangelists are careful to tell us; in His conflicts with the devil, He uses that Word as the gospels again tell us; and in His teachings, He is ever referring to that Word, rebuking the Jews for their value for anything else, for their use of traditions, and their neglect of it, and giving them to know that not a jot or tittle of it can in anywise fail; that the Scripture cannot be broken; and that if Moses and the prophets be not heard, even one risen from the dead would not avail to lead to repentance (John 5:47).

This is much to be observed; and thus did the Son, in His day, honor the Word. The Holy Ghost, in like manner, is a Spirit of revelation in the apostles, and fills up by them the Word of God. And not only so, but in them He does continually, clearly, and fully express His high divine sense of the value of the Scriptures. If man dare not add to it, God need not. It is perfect, able, as the Apostle

tells us, thoroughly to furnish the saint to all good works. And no authority stands, or can possibly stand, on equal ground with it, so that even if an angel were to gainsay it, he must be cursed. It matters not who it may be, all must sink below the voice and authority of that gospel or revelation of God which had been delivered.

Thus do we see, from the beginning to the end, the Lord's value for His own Word-how He has made a hedge about it, that no rude hand may guiltlessly touch it, and also has appointed it to be the great standard at all times, on which the history of His people, either for blessing or for curse, was to turn, and has bound it around the heart and soul, before the eye, and on the palms of His people, and given it an authority which nothing is to be allowed either to gainsay or to rival. God of old, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each in His day, attests this. And all this is precious to the soul. God and His Word are joined together. To give up His Word is to give up Himself, for He can be known only by His own revelation.

But if we see the divine estimate of the Word, with equal clearness and sureness, we may see our title to that Word, and how the Lord has joined us and the Word together also, and that no man, therefore, can put such asunder.

By one short sentence the "ready writer" has given all saints an immediate personal interest in all the old scriptures. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." This one sentence writes our title to a most precious inheritance. The old scriptures are God's gift, and this word from Rom. 15 is the deed of gift, entitling all saints to a common property in it. The title is short and clear and simple, as the inheritance conveyed is invaluable.

But with equal simplicity can we make out our title to the new scriptures. Luke addresses his Gospel to a private Christian friend, as we may speak, hereby showing that it was written for the saint in the most ordinary circumstances-not committed to any elect order of persons, or persons in authority, but to a private Christian friend who bore no office or distinction of any kind; of whom, indeed, we hear nothing but in this address of the Evangelist to him. But this shows that this Gospel is given to us all. And if Luke be thus part of our inheritance, so surely are Matthew, Mark and John. We ask no favor from anyone to allow this-the title is so clear, so simple, so beyond all question-and on the very same ground is our title to the book of The Acts. This was the property of the same private friend, the same Theophilus; any lover of God may deem himself in fullest possession of it, as a further part of his inheritance, and use it without reserve.

The epistles in their turn not only convey their rare and valuable treasures to our souls, but at the very outset tell us of our title to them. They are addressed (saving in personal cases, as Timothy, Titus, or Philemon) to the saints or the churches in the different places to which the Spirit by His apostles sends them; and the book of Revelation (which, following the epistles, closes the volume of God) is sent to the seven churches in Asia; and thus we read the title of all saints to these words. They are not specially committed to any separated order of men, but cast upon the hearts of all the saints, as Moses had done with all the statutes and judgments of Israel. And I may add, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" would have never been written to the saints at Colosse if they had not title to the immediate personal enjoyment of that Word. But so it is, blessed be God. He has as simply joined His Word and the heart of His saint together, as He has joined Himself and His Word together. And we say again, "What... God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

And if any do so violently-if any take away the key of knowledge-they are falling under the direct judgment of the Lord; "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge."
Luke 11:52.

The Holy Scriptures: Part 2

We have already noticed God's estimation of His own precious revelation, and His care that it should be kept pure. But in connection with this, I would for a moment look at 1 Kings 13.

The kingdom of the ten tribes under Jeroboam was at this time an unclean place. The calves of gold set up at Bethel and at Dan were the confidence of the people, obedient to this word of their king: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of... Egypt."

The Lord sends a missionary into that land with words of judgment. His commission, his ministry, and his conduct in his ministry, were all specially ordered by "the word of the Lord." He comes out of Judah to Bethel "by the word of the Lord" (v. 1); he cries against the altar there "in the word of the Lord" (v. 2); and his behavior, while in that place and doing that service, is prescribed to him "by the word of the Lord" (v. 9). And thus, as we said, his commission, his ministry, and his conduct-all are under the light and authority of God's word. This provided for everything; he had only to observe it.

This is most particularly marked by the Spirit of God in this narrative. And at the beginning, the Lord's missionary, "the man of God," acts accordingly. He pleads "the word" as the warrant for his ministry of judgment upon the altar at Bethel, and also against the offers and invitations of Jeroboam, making it the only light and guide of his path while in his country. And this was all safe and happy. The Lord had given him a very simple directory, and in the observing of it his path was maintained in security and peace.

But that old serpent who in the Garden of Eden made "the word of the Lord" the object of his attack, and has ever since been seducing the heart of man from it, tries with this man of God something further, since the offers and invitations of a king are resisted.

There was "an old prophet" in Israel at that time-another man of God, I doubt not, like Lot, found in a place where he could not act in character as a prophet; for how could he reprove the darkness with which he was more or less in fellowship?

Such a one is easily used by the enemy, and so it proves here. The father of lies employs him to do his work, and he tempts the Lord's missionary to eat and drink with him, contrary to "the word" which he had received, under the pretense that "an angel" from the Lord had spoken to him. And the temptation prevails; the path of simple obedience to "the word of the Lord" is deserted, and the servant of God dies under the judgment of God-a kind of pillar of salt-a kind of abiding witness and warning to us all, that our souls may ever hold to this, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Deep and serious and, for the present evil day, well-timed is the instruction of this little narrative. The man who withstood the invitations of a king, and had determined on cleaving to "the word of the Lord," though against the offers of a man in power, falls under the pretenses of a man of religion. The religious "old prophet" causes one to fall whom the splendors of a court had tempted in vain. And so it is still and will increasingly be. The devil is deceiving souls by what the world

judges to be religion, and he succeeds, if he can but withdraw from subjection to "the word of the Lord." Concerning those who are not subject to the Word, God says "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. 8:20.

Clearly do we trace in the Scriptures God's value for His Word or revelation, and the believer's title to it. If God's Word be deserted, He Himself is given up, for He can be known only by the revelation of it. When the Word is deserted, there is no light in the soul, for to leave the Word is to leave "the key of knowledge" and our Lord joins desertion with not entering into the kingdom of God (Luke 11).

A second error is taking the key of knowledge and using it to one's own destruction. The untaught and unstable do this (2 Pet. 3:16). The mere human or intellectual man, in the confidence of his own strength, takes this key and injures, all he can, the door of the treasury of wisdom and knowledge through his awkwardness or violence. The danger is lest, being offended by this wresting of Scripture, the saint follows the former error and lets the key of knowledge be taken away and deposited in some religious hand. But one error is not to be corrected by another; the key is neither to be taken away nor used unskillfully.

I, however, fully allow, and it is to be deeply remembered by our souls in a day of intellectual pretense like the present, and of much activity of human thought and wisdom, that the Book of God is not to be subjected to the mere acuteness of man's mind. Far otherwise indeed! It demands, in the name of God, our full subjection to itself. Nor is it written, as one has said, for critics, for scholars, or for judges, but for sinners. "It is not an interesting exercise for our faculties that we are to expect in it. And it is by laying aside malice and envy and hypocrisies, and by simple desire after the living God Himself, that we are really to grow by its sincere milk or strong meat (1 Pet. 2:1, 2)." I would indeed add this to what I have said on the value of the Scriptures. The Lord forbid that we should say anything that would appear to treat it as only one of the many books of the schools. For the Son of God is not the mere master of a new school, but the living Head of the Church to minister nourishment through joints and bands to the whole body. And let me add the striking and seasonable language of one of other days: "Wouldst thou know that the matters contained in the Word of Christ are real things? Then never read them for the sake of mere knowledge. Look for some beams of Christ's glory and power in every verse. Account nothing knowledge but as it is seasoned with some revelation of the glorious presence of Christ and His quickening Spirit. Don't converse about spiritual truths for conversation's sake, but speak for edification's sake.

This would help to put the soul into a right attitude when purposing to learn the secrets of God's most precious oracles. And when the Apostle prays for the saints (as in Eph. 1 and Col. 1), that they may grow in knowledge, he does this after he has sought for them that they might have a spiritual understanding; and this tells us, or intimates to us, that mere acquaintance with or information about Scripture, would all be divinely worth nothing, and that we should be careful not to pursue inquiry into revealed truth by the light or skill of the human mind, but by the exercise of the understanding given to us in Christ Jesus.

Surely I would uphold all this before my own conscience at all times. But it leaves untouched the great truth we have been mainly considering- the value of the written Word with God and to us, and that it is the one great standard for the testing of all our thoughts, and is the common

inheritance of all the children. It is even the delight and commendation of an inspired Apostle, that Timothy, the child of a child of God, from his childhood had known that Word. So surely has God bound it about the heart and soul of His people. Therefore, again we say, let no authority divorce them or put them asunder; neither let anyone use it but in that holy obedient mind that is due to a gift of God.

The Spirit, in a very large sense, gives the Scriptures to all. For in the inspired penman of The Acts, the Holy Spirit commends the Bereans for their candor, their nobleness, in searching the Scriptures, whether what even an apostle was teaching was according to them. It was pleasing to the mind of the Holy Spirit to have His Word thus used and honored by these poor private Jews. Bereans they were, of the synagogue of that city; and the Spirit rejoices at seeing the Scriptures in their hands, making them the standard, even though an apostle was preaching unto them. This surely puts the written Word in high places. And so the same Apostle reasoned with the Jews out of the Scriptures, from "morning till evening," as Jesus Himself restored the hearts of the two disciples by leading them through all the Scriptures. Peter also commends the disciples to the light of the prophetic word, and by his own word would ever have them bear in mind all that was needful for them, whether for past, present, or future truth, and never (as another has observed) thinks of commending them to any official or apostolic successor of his, but to that Word which the Holy Ghost by him was then delivering. Even teachers, feeders of God's flock-as spiritual elders set over them- are commended to God and His Word, and not to anything else, in order that they might be kept and edified. (Acts 20; Luke 24 Pet. 1.)

This, and more than this, which we have, is more than enough to make our souls prize this precious, precious gift of God-much more precious to our souls by the attempt there has been made to take it from us, as not belonging to us, and to deposit it in some dark and distant corner. Some have sought to put asunder what God has joined together-the heart of His wayfaring saint and the light of His Word.

God's Word may be given up by the infidel who rejects it; but it may be given up, though in another way, by him who would join other words with it.

Traditional Christianity is real infidelity, for it denies the Scriptures which assert their own sufficiency, and makes itself the standard. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. 8:20. And again, "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. 8:9. A betrayer of the Book, in purer days, was judged to be as wicked a one as the denier of the faith. But the one is profane infidelity, the other is religious infidelity, and man by much chooses the latter. It enables him to keep God at a distance, which is the desire of man, or the flesh, and at the same time to keep a conscience at peace with religion still, which is equally his desire.

In closing I would just say that we need the whole of it, but nothing supplemental to it. This is intimated both by the Lord and Moses: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Deut. 8; Matt. 4.) This testimony is strong. These words tell us that nothing less, nothing more, is needed as food for the sustaining and strengthening of divine life in our souls, the Spirit alone being most surely able to make it effectual. The soul does not know what portion of the precious Word, in its conflict with various darknesses and subtleties of

Satan, it may need, but it can live by that Word. Its life will need nothing beside. These two thoughts are clearly intimated in these words. And thus, for our blessing as for the Divine Giver's praise, we are not to add thereto or diminish there from. We may and shall attain different measures in the knowledge of it, according as there is gift of God and the exercise of the spiritual senses; but we are to make it the common standard in the camp of God. And the standard-bearer of the Lord must not faint in the day of battle. A firm hand and a broken heart are to give character to us.

Hope

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

How to Address God and the Lord Jesus in Prayer

Every Christian is taught by the Spirit to address God as Father, although some are inhibited by faulty teaching and are afraid to thus speak. We, however, know that it is correct to address our prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings to our God and Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:20).

There are recorded instances of the apostles praying to the Lord Jesus, and there are principles upon which we may correctly do the same. The Apostle Paul, as the Lord's servant, addressed his request to the Lord that the thorn given to him for the flesh might be removed. It seems that the affliction was something which was a hindrance to him in his service (or at least he judged that it was), so he says, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice" (2 Cor. 12:8). It was just and right for a servant to go to his Lord about anything connected with the service which he was to render; so may we address our Lord concerning any service for Him. "Ye serve the Lord Christ." Col. 3:24.

The martyr Stephen when about to leave this scene addressed his Lord, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." What could be more suitable than for a servant to thus end his service-to commit his spirit to Him. He further requested of the Lord, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Acts 7:59, 60.

The Lord is the Head of the Church, and we may address Him regarding matters concerning His assembly. He is the One who has ascended on high and given gifts to men. The Lord in speaking of the need for harvest hands, said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." Matt. 9:38. How different much of our service would be if we had the consciousness of our being sent of the Lord, that we were acting under His orders, and that we sought His guidance and succor at all times.

We well understand that we are to give thanks to God for His unspeakable gift-His beloved Son (2 Cor. 9:15)-but are we not to lift our voices in praise to Him of whom we can say, "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? Gal. 2:20. Rev. 1:5 and 6 is an anthem of praise to the Son: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

In the last chapter of Revelation, after the Lord has spoken of Himself as "I Jesus"-the One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever-there is a loving response from the Church to Himself: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Then He adds, "Surely I come quickly," and the bride responds, "Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (see Rev. 22:12-20).

We should desire to pray intelligently and be able to address our God and Father by the Spirit in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in suitable connections to address prayers, supplications, and giving of thanks to the Lord Jesus. Distinctions in addressing the Father and in addressing the Son should be made, as when speaking of the Father's sending and giving His Son, and in speaking of the Son's giving Himself for us.

It would be well, however, to add a word of caution here. We would not discourage the feeblest saint from praying-and praying without fear of making mistakes. The Father understands the heart and, though our expressions may be faulty, He loves to hear those Spirit-begotten breathings addressing Him as Father. The Lord too knows all about our frailty and lack of understanding. The overflow of a full heart or the confiding expressions of a burdened heart mean more than intellectual exactness from a cold heart or routine prayers about difficulties in general. May the Lord grant us fervor of spirit in our prayers and praise, and also give us in measure to express ourselves more in accordance with His Word.

Is Christ Your Choice? Your Choice With All Your Heart?

Jehovah said of Caleb, one of the twelve spies, "He hath another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully."

What a magnificent testimony for God this happy servant was in an evil day. "Moses," said he, "sent me... to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart" (Josh. 14:7). It "is an exceeding good land,... a land which floweth with milk and honey" (Numb. 14:7, 8).

We can be sure that if our hearts are not fully on Christ, we will only bring up a slander upon the land (v. 36). There can be no true testimony for Christ if our hearts are divided.

David was a man who delighted in the Lord with "his whole heart" (expression used six times in Psalm 119). He admonished King Solomon, his son, to serve the Lord "with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts."

(1 Chron. 28:9)

It is the heart God looks at. Shall it not be wholly for Christ, fully set upon pleasing Him in all things?

In King Asa's day, all Judah and Benjamin sought the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul and with their whole desire, and "He was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about.... The heart of Asa was perfect all his days"

(2 Chron. 15). Still, at the end he had to be warned by Hanani the seer: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." 2 Chron. 16:9.

Oh, for a full heart for a full Savior!

Of Jehoshaphat we read, "His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord" (2 Chron. 17:6); he was richly rewarded. What a precious record in the Scriptures of those who fully followed the Lord, and what a sad record of those who did not. All these things "are written for our admonition."

Amaziah, the king, "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart" (2 Chron. 25:2); and he came to a sad end.

His son, King Uzziah, was like him; "and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (2 Chron. 26:5). It is said that God helped him against the Philistines, and afterward he was "marvelously helped, till he was strong"; then he failed and died a leper.

King Hezekiah was after the blessed example of David, in his faithfulness (2 Chron. 29:2); and the Lord greatly blessed and prospered him.

Surely rich returns are assured for true-hearted devotedness, and the Spirit delights to recite every act done out of love of God. A full recompense is made to all who act thus.

Note the bright and precious reference to King Josiah (2 Chron. 34:2). "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left." He "made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul.... And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it."

"All his days they departed not from following the Lord" (v. 33). They kept such a passover as had not been kept since the days of Samuel (2 Chron. 35:18). When he died, "Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing

, women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day,... And his deeds, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah."

What a noble account of one whose heart was fully for the Lord! What a voice for you and me!

Oh, let there be no divided heart within us any longer. Let us have done with all wretched lukewarmness. As refreshing as wholehearted constancy is to the blessed Christ, so distasteful and nauseating to Him is lukewarmness and half-heartedness. Let us repudiate it in His presence, and so cleave to Him with purpose of heart, that His precious, boundless love and His deep, warm and changeless affection may mightily lay hold of us and constrain us. This will melt out all the ice and frost that has been so apparent to Him who loves us.

"O fill me, Jesus Savior, with Thy love; Lead, lead me to the living fount above! Thither may I in simple faith draw nigh, And never to another fountain fly,

But unto Thee."

As the sun shines more directly and intensely upon the earth, so winter yields to the green of spring; and soon the first fruit appears, the song birds return, and all nature smiles. So as we get more directly and individually under the power of His pervading love, the barrenness and chill of winter in our lives give place to the verdure of His presence; blossoms and fruit greet His eye. The heart sings in the joy of His constant smile. The drought then is broken and the floodtide of His grace prevails in everything, like spring rains make ready for a harvest.

Have you noticed the shore when the tide is out? How many rocks and pools appear, and how desolate it all looks; how many unsightly things appear. So when with the Christian the tide is low, how many wretched things make their appearance; mean tempers and feelings, pride and show, narrowness and touchiness, come to the surface- you hardly thought they could be there.

But when the floodtide of God's love overflows, all is changed. How pleasant the sight is of one, humble and joyful in Christ, considerate and kind to others, useful, fruitful and comforting to all. What he gives out comes fresh from the heart, having been enjoyed in communion with God.

John 17:17-19

In the 17th of John Jesus prayed the Father for those who were not of the world, even as He was not of the world, that they might be sanctified (set apart) through the truth of the Father's word, and in addition to which He says, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." It is thus that a sanctification is produced, the like of which was never before possible. Has the Father's word concerning His beloved Son, in humiliation, and the Person of Christ now in glory so affected us as to set us apart from all that is in the world?

John 20:17

If the words of the Lord Jesus have not been made very real to us, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God," we have missed the enjoyment of what belongs to His own now as the result of His sufferings. It was an announcement such as never could have been made before. There was a new company, blessed in association with Christ in resurrection, whom He designated as His brethren, who were in the same place of divine favor and love that He was in before His Father and His God. In knowing this, how blessed to sing while here on earth the song in which He leads (Psalm 22:22; 40:3; Heb. 2:11, 12).

John and Peter: a Comparison in Conversation, Walk and Ministry

John and Peter

The two most prominent of the disciples at the last Passover supper, whose courses are thrown together in the whole Gospel of John (Peter and John), were converted in different ways. John heard the word of John the Baptist. "Looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" John 1:36. He is ravished by the beauty of Jesus, and attracted to His Person. A little word is let out from John the Baptist's heart, and John follows Jesus.

Now when Peter was converted, it was different. Andrew went to Peter, and brought him to Jesus, and he said, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Later in their lives you never find that the Lord had to tell John to follow Him, though He had to say to Peter, "Follow thou Me." It is remarkable how Peter's conversion gives a character to his ministry in his epistle and service, as John's so markedly did so in his. John was a true Kohathite, bearing the golden vessels of the tabernacle, the Person of Christ. Peter never went beyond the Messias made Lord and Christ. Still, one's character may be much altered after conversion, which is an encouragement to us. The men who gathered to David to the Cave of Adullam had but sorry characters, yet they had fine characters when the kingdom was set up. Why? Because they remained with David. So the power of the Lord keeps us in His presence and that will mend our characters.

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?" John 13:23-25. John then, drawing more closely, gets the mind of Christ, and this because he was leaning on His bosom. He did not draw near to get the mind; but because he was near, he got the mind of the Lord. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John 14:21). No matter how ignorant we may be, if we love Christ, we will get the intelligence of His mind, and He will manifest Himself to us. Mary, in John 20, had little intelligence, but she had a heart that could well nigh break itself for Christ, and she got the manifestation of Himself as well as His commandments. To such hearts as these He manifests Himself. Is your heart resting on His bosom? Is your ear open to hear His Word? Are you so near that He communicates to you His mind?

Why do we go to another to solve a question? Often it is because we feel that he is nearer to the Lord than we are.

In Judas there was the habitual allowance of sin, and this was the groundwork of his fall; it hardened his conscience. The Lord could not reveal His mind to the others until Judas had gone out. The presence of the traitor hindered the manifestation of His glory.

"A new commandment I give unto you" (John 13:34). There are in other languages two words for "new"; but in English we have only one. Suppose you see a man with a coat of an entirely new fashion and cut, that never was seen before; we say, This is a new coat; that is, of an entirely new

kind. But suppose you see an ordinary coat, but of new cloth; there is many a coat like it, still in that sense it is new. It is in the first sense that this word in verse 34 is used: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you." And this love is that which rose beyond and above every littleness and stupidity and failure of His disciples.

Do you seek to love each other as He did, in such a way that it will rise above every pettiness, every bitterness, every hindrance, as Christ loved you? Divine love is never thrown back, and never changed by the unworthiness of its object; it is superior to everything. Like a stream whose banks may for some distance be smooth, but when they become crooked and rocky, the same stream flows on and on, unchanged in its course and its quality; such is His love.

In Peter's case we find a solemn yet blessed lesson-that a fall never happens to a Christian without a previous warning, and without some dealings from the Lord. If Peter had taken the warning, he might not have fallen. May we be of those who know His voice, and bow to the washing of the Word, knowing the blessed object He has in this action of His love.

Josiah and His Days: "After All This"

The history of the kings of Israel and Judah is a dreary recital of provokings of the Holy One to anger, so that the reigns of a Jehoshaphat, a Jotham, and a Hezekiah stand out brightly as lights in the midst of a dark waste. The spirit of idolatry, dispossessed for a while by repentant Manasseh, returned in sevenfold power, for "Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made," and did worse and worse, so that according to the number of the cities of Judah were her gods, and according to the number of the streets in Jerusalem, they set up altars to burn incense unto Baal. The horses which the kings of Judah gave to the sun were stabled at the entering in of the house of the Lord (2 Kings 23:11), while the ark of the Lord was cast out of the sanctuary (2 Chron. 35:3). It is at this juncture, an hour of all but total apostasy, that the son of Amon, a child eight years old, came to the throne. But how wondrous are the ways of God! He had reserved unto Himself in the midst of these abominations, a remnant who, like Simeon and Anna of after days, sighed and cried before Him; and the boy king, raised in idolatry, found grace in His eyes. The history of His work in and through Josiah is given with much minuteness in 2 Chron. 34 and 35.

In the eighth year of his reign, "while he was yet young," Josiah began to seek after the God of David his father. Four years after, at the age of twenty, he set about purging Judah and Jerusalem of high places, groves, and carved images; broke down the altars of Baal; made dust of the idols, strewed it upon the graves of their worshippers, and burned the bones of their priests on the altars.

Nor did he stop here. As a consequence of the idolatry of the latter years of the reign of Solomon, ten tribes separated from the throne of David; but the faith in the energy of which Josiah acted had respect to the claims of Jehovah in regard to the land, and he would not cleanse Judah and Jerusalem only, but "so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali." And here we must not fail to notice an incident which, though unmentioned in these chapters, is given at some length in 2 Kings 23. Standing by the altar at Bethel (the seat of the false worship devised by Jeroboam, the first king of the separate kingdom of Israel), while engaged in the act of breaking it down and defiling it with the bones of its idolatrous priests, Josiah turned and noticed an inscription at a short distance from him. He inquired what it was, and was told by the men of the city, "It is the sepulcher of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel." More than three hundred years had elapsed since the man of God cried in the word of the Lord against the altar, and declared that a child should be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, who should do such and such things. Though solemn indeed had been the failure of the man of God, directly after speaking the word of the Lord, that word had been brought to pass. So as Josiah stood between the altar and the sepulcher, and listened to the prophecy, he had both a wondrous confirmation of his being the special servant of the Lord for the work in which he was engaged, and a solemn admonition by remembering the failure of the man of God to hearken attentively to the Lord.

Six years later he sent to the temple to repair and amend that which former kings of Judah had destroyed, and proceeded to restore, according to its prescribed form, the worship of the true God. In the midst of these labors, a book was discovered by the high priest—a long neglected and forgotten book—what was it? "A book of the law of the Lord given by Moses." It was taken and read before the king. "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes." "Go," he said, "inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book." Scripture may be neglected, but it cannot be broken; the Lord answered Josiah that while he personally, on account of his tenderheartedness in trembling at the word, should be gathered to his fathers in peace, so as not to see the evil, the curses read out of the book should assuredly take hold. Having gathered together all the people, both great and small, into the house of the Lord, he read before them all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found there. He made a covenant, "with all his heart, and with all his soul," to perform that which was written in the book; caused all present to stand to it; took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to Israel; and brought the people back to the service of Jehovah. "And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers."

And now came the crowning, as it were, of this zeal for the Lord. The Passover was kept after a most godly sort. The Levites prepared themselves by the houses of their fathers, after their courses, "according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son." They killed the passover, sanctified themselves, prepared their brethren, and the priests sprinkled the blood from their hands. They removed the burnt offering, that they might give according to the division of the families of the people, to offer unto the Lord "according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses." The passover was roasted "according to the ordinance." The singers, the sons of Asaph, stood in their places "according to the commandment of David." Josiah had a "Thus saith the Lord for all he did. What a wondrously lovely picture! "There was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." It was reserved for a backslidden people, on their return to God and His Word, to keep such a commemoration of the night much to be remembered when the blood of the lamb was under His holy eye for His Israel, as even Solomon in all his glory never kept.

The hour was one of light and gladness in Zion. Yet there was rottenness at the core: "Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord." Jer. 3:10. And thick darkness was gathering ahead, and he that hindered the bursting of the storm was soon to be taken out of the way.

Nor did the sun of Josiah go down in an altogether cloudless horizon. The emphatic words which stand at the head of this paper are found here, and form a hinge on which the Bible narrative of Josiah and his times turns to a shaded side. "After all this" (we read) "when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and

Josiah went out against him." v. 20. The potsherd of the earth were at strife among themselves; why was it that the Lord's anointed was found mixing himself up with their strife, unless indeed he

had a word from the Lord bidding him to do so? Had he such a word? No; but the very opposite. Listen to Necho's remonstrance: "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not." And mark what the Scripture says: "Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo." v. 22.

How solemnly instructive this is! Why is it that the ear which was recently so attentive was deaf to the voice of God? We are told concerning another godly king, Uzziah, that "he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction," and we may regard the case of Josiah as somewhat parallel. The flesh in a saint, through unwatchfulness, will fatten on the very prosperings of God; and a lifted-up heart both deafens and blinds. But though we may refuse to listen to the voice of God, there is no disguise by which we can get away from His eye, and no shelter that will avail us. Feigning himself, like ungodly Ahab, to be another than himself, like Ahab he was struck down by an arrow commissioned of Him who sees through all disguises.

So Josiah fell-taken away in loving-kindness from the evil to come. Yet it is sad and humbling to see a saint of God fall by the hand of the uncircumcised in an hour of self-will.

Great lamentation was made over him: "All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations." v. 24,25. Let us draw near to the mourners and see if they have not some word of admonition for ourselves.

In the book of "The Lamentations of Jeremiah" (chap. 4:20), there are these significant words: "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen."

It was with his whole heart and soul that Josiah set himself to work to bring back worshipers of graven images to the living and true God. He was a bright and a shining light, and the people were willing for a season to walk in his light. "All his days" (as we have seen) "they departed not from following the Lord." Yet they were at heart, according to the Lord's declaration, idolaters still. They walked in the light of Josiah, not in the light of the Lord. They lived upon the breath of Josiah, not upon the words that proceeded out of the mouth of God. They thought to dwell under the shadow of Josiah, not under the shadow of the Almighty.

These things happened of old. They "are written for our admonition." Like the bell swinging to and fro above the sunken rock, giving warning to the mariner that near where he is passing others have been wrecked, they sound in our ears, even while we are being borne along by wind and tide- "Take heed!" "Take heed,... lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Heb. 3:12.

Leaving Us an Example

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

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

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

Remember in the passage in Luke's Gospel where our Lord speaks of the servant who says down in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," immediately he begins to eat and drink with the drunken, and to beat the menservants and the maidens. His attitude changes the moment he relinquishes the hope of the near return of his lord. There is nothing that keeps our steps ordered in the path of holiness more than constantly keeping before us the fact that before the day is over, before the sun rises on the morrow, we may be called home to be with our blessed Lord. That moment will wipe out all the difficulties of the journey, all the trials that are ours in our family, in our work, in the assembly, and elsewhere.

Growing weary waiting for Moses, they made a golden calf, and Moses found them engaged in a carnal worship. When he returned, they were not up to spiritual worship. They had dropped down to the plane of carnality. Moses, the man of God, filled with zeal, breaks those tables of stone, comes into the camp, and sees the execution of the judgment of God upon the guilty rebels. Where the glory of God is at stake, the honor of His name, God Himself deals severely. So it is that the Son of man in the midst of the golden candlesticks in the 2nd and 3rd of Revelation, views

the churches with a scrutiny that is pure and that is true: "Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, forever."

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

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

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

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

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

In the next chapter, verse 12: "And Moses said unto the LORD, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight." Verse 13: "Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may

find grace in Thy sight: and consider that this nation is Thy people." Isn't that grand? He is casting that people back upon God, so he reminds God that they are His people. That is faith, beloved.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why is David called the man after God's own heart? I believe it is for this reason: that David had a conscience that was operative, and when he sinned, he was willing to admit it one hundred per

cent. When he made his confession, there were no conditions attached to it-I have sinned. I have done very foolishly. I offer no excuse. That is a man after God's own heart.

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

around Saul.

Leaving Us an Example: Part 2

1 Chron. 21

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

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

17th verse: "And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let Thine hand, I pray Thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Thy people, that they should be plagued." O brethren, there is something majestic in that prayer. What a clean, blessed confession it is-I have done the sinning. I am the one that is guilty. He doesn't lay the blame on Satan. He doesn't say, The devil made me do it, and I couldn't help myself. He says, "I have sinned... but as for these sheep, what have they done?" Oh, that is the heart of Christ!

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

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

"And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof."

Now let us think of that for a few minutes. It is one of the most remarkable incidents in all the Old Testament, familiar to most of us here in this room. There was a woman who had no real interest in this infant. It wasn't her child. Her heart was cold, unfeeling, unsympathetic. She was moved by two of the cruelest motives of which the human heart knows anything—jealousy and envy.

She had lost her own child, but the second woman still possessed her offspring. She stole the babe, but when she saw that she couldn't have her way, she was willing to have the other's babe divided by the sword of Solomon. She was willing to stand there and see that little body severed and its life taken, rather than to be defeated in her own willfulness. This put the true mother to the test, and out of the depth of her heart's affection she cried, "Give her the living child"! Yes. It was the heart of a mother yearning over that child that was dear to her. The other woman said, "Divide it."

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

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

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

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

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

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

One thinks back on the history of some of the Lord's people, when a brother in their company was beginning to teach something that distressed his brethren. He was admonished on the ground that his projected course was threatening the peace and unity of the saints. But all expostulations were of no avail. He pursued his willful course and split the Church of God. To apply our illustration above, Was that the heart of the true mother of the child? No, that is the cry of the other woman. Let the sword "divide." Why? Because the man would rather have his way and have the Church of God divided than surrender his will that the Church of God might be preserved. How does that sound in keeping with this verse: "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"?

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

As I stand here, I think of a dear man and his wife whom I have known for nearly forty years. God in His providence has seen fit to place them in different assemblies over the country, and everywhere they have lived, the saints have thanked God for them. O beloved saints of God, isn't that the heart of Christ? "Not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." I will tell you something else, and you know it is true. There are certain brethren that if we heard they were

coming to live where we do and be among us, we would draw a sigh; we would feel sad. Why? Because what characterizes them is that they trouble the children of God, and distress the saints. They are a burden, a care, a stumbling block.

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

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

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

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

A Life Told

"Many... said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on Him there." John 10:41, 42.

John did no miracle. In this respect his life was quite commonplace. But he said many things that were true about Christ. He said (and his whole life was behind his words), "Behold the Lamb of God."

Here, when John is off the scene, the people are face to face with the One he had witnessed to, and are constrained to say, "All things that John spake of this man were true." The result? "Many believed on Him there."

We are prone to depend on the unusual, the spectacular and the miraculous for the results we seek! Is it not, after all, more often the simple testimony of souls in love with Christ and on fire for Him that God uses?

Light and Light's Reflection

What can be more blessed than God's having unveiled the face of Christ to the heart, and the bright light of that face shining down and filling the heart. The Holy Spirit is given to bring it always there. But, bright as it is, the treasure is in an earthen vessel, and we are still in the wilderness.

God knows nothing so beautiful as Christ; He would have us ever looking on Him in whose all perfect beauty the Almighty heart finds all delight. That God has unveiled that face and let all its light shine down into our hearts is indeed most blessed; but from that very thing responsibility comes in doubly. We have to walk as light bearers. That Christ with uncovered face is a Christ whose light shines down in order to shine out through His people. All the light which they ought to give out is in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If you looked at responsibility as connected only with self, you would murmur and be miserable.

Whenever we look at responsibility, it makes us feel the need of just such sweetness as we find in the thought that we are left down here as witnesses for the Lord. As soon as He comes, He will fill the whole earth with glory; we must wait for that. Our present position is as a flock for the "slaughter," passing over the earth, letting light shine out. When He comes He will give the higher glory. What sweetness there is in the thought of being used by the Lord down here to give out light-serving His purpose-for He will have a light on the earth while He is away. When He comes, it will not only be the joys of His kingdom, but you will have the thought that you have served His turn in the wilderness, letting light (His light) shine out. And when He put you there, did He not know what the earthen, vessel was? The weaker, the more feeble a people, the more will be their sense of His power.

Soon we shall be up there with Christ. God does not mean us to be happy without Him; but God would first have us to be witnesses for Him down here, to show out as much light as we can.

Not only have I seen the face of Jesus Christ (see John 14:21), and, oh, what a sight beyond all sights! but I have a connection with Christ in the light. I have not only to look away from things present and see that bright light up there, but I have to reflect it down here. I may be a very bad reflector; in substance Christ says, Never mind, go on, I will give the power; I know you are nothing in yourself, and that you are in the place where it is night; but go on giving out light; soon you will be in God's day. That morning without clouds will usher us into the light where Christ now is. He is the bright and morning Star. For nineteen hundred years He has been dealing with a people down here; the night may be very dark, but the darkness does not reach up to the bright and morning Star. No cloud can cover Him; soon He will shine out. We are only on sufferance here, on our way to what lies farther on. He is our bright and morning Star; we shall see Him. He will take us up and guide us to the Father's house, before the sun shines out. It is that hope which gives one courage to go on in the midst of failure.

To be sure, I have failed. Have I been a good light reflector? No! but I am to go on as I can till He comes, till I see Him as the bright and morning Star. It is not the looking for bright light reflectors at

His coming (though we ought to be such), nor the expecting to see lamps filled with oil, but the Holy Spirit in the bride wanting Him to come. Does He hear you cry, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Are your hearts so going forth as to be ever saying, "Come, Lord Jesus"? You need not look round and wait for another, you may say it to Him. Ah! cultivate communion with Christ in connection with that word "Come"! I know nothing so fitted to raise one up out of the world as having the soul in communion with Christ about that- looking at ourselves as part of the bride still on earth, and the Spirit in her saying, "Come, Lord Jesus."

The Little Israelitish Maid: Christ Sovereign Remedy

2 Kings 5:2, 3

"The Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife." What a contrast between her and her master! He stands before us as the very personification of worldly greatness, having, as to this world, all that heart could wish, save that he was a leper-God's hand resting upon him, as it were, in judgment. But here was a little maid, torn from her country and her kindred by the rude hand of violence, and carried far from the land of her God and of her fathers to be a captive in a strange land. Could you well conceive of circumstances more distressing? And yet this little maid has carried with her a secret, a treasure, which makes her the channel of blessing to Naaman and his house. She has the secret of God with her.

The Syrian captain, great as he was, could not heal the disease under which he was pining away; nor could all his riches procure him a remedy from others. But here is a little captive maid who knows enough of God, and of His prophet by whom, at that time, he was acting so gloriously in Israel, as to say one day to her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

What simple blessed faith was here. She knew the prophet and doubtless the prophet's God, and she unhesitatingly believes not only that he could, but that he would recover her master of his leprosy. And how beautifully her faith finds outflow and expression. It is the spontaneous sighing of her heart, as it were, over her master's helpless, hopeless misery-helpless and hopeless as to anything but that secret of God she had carried in her bosom to this strange land.

"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria!" What a picture of what the Christian is, or at least ought to be. Of what he is indeed, in one sense; for however little it may be manifested, each saint does carry the secret of God with him. Alas! how little does the consciousness of this fill our hearts and mold our ways. We see sin and misery on every hand, and see it, alas! too often with callous insensibility; and even when our hearts do melt in view of it, how little have we of the faith which brings Jesus into connection with it all. Are our thoughts and hearts so full of him-of Jesus-our prophet, priest, and king-that ever and anon we involuntarily exclaim to one child of sorrow or another, Would God you knew Jesus? Would God you were with Jesus!

Have we, my brethren, the living consciousness from day to day, of possessing in Jesus a remedy for every evil, a medicine for every wound? Poor sinner, if you did but know Him! He is the Healer of every wound, the Remedy for every disease, the Soother of every sorrow, and the Fullness of eternal life and joy. What that you knew Him!

I do not say that He would, at present, heal all your bodily ailments, relieve your temporal circumstances, and bring you into a condition of earthly happiness and prosperity. I could not promise you these things on His behalf. But He has far better things for you than these. When

Jesus was here in humiliation, He did heal the bodily maladies of all who came to Him. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to our Lord to ask Him, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

But what did all this end in? Why the world, wooed, as it were, by these demonstrations of love, wooed by the love of God in sending His Son, and by all these gracious loving acts of His while here,-the world rejected God's only-begotten Son, and completed the proof of its own deep and deadly, and irremediable wickedness, by putting Him to death. What then? The world was given over to judgment. You may start at such a statement; but our Lord Himself, as having come to the hour of His final rejection, says, "Now is the judgment of this world." The world had been on trial until then. Every means had been tried that could act upon the moral nature of man for his recovery, and all had issued in the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God. The proof of the world's lost condition was now complete; there could be nothing beyond; and hence the verdict is brought in and sentence passed. True, there is a way of escape. Through the precious blood which man's wicked hands have shed there is full remission, and perfect righteousness, and heavenly joys, and everlasting life, for all who believe God's testimony concerning Jesus. But as to all others, sentence is passed, and they lie under condemnation. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not is condemned already." And again, "the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36

God is not now acting to make this world the place of blessing. His present object is not to relieve this world of the miseries under which it groans, but to gather sinners out of it by the preaching of the gospel. He will make this earth a paradise of joy by and by, when, by the judgments which attend the second coming of Christ, he has purged the earth of its corrupters and destroyers. Then, in the times of restitution of all things, the curse shall be removed, sighing and sorrow shall cease, and joy and gladness extend from shore to shore. But at present the world lies under sentence, awaiting the hour of its execution, when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:7, 8

Why is the execution of this sentence delayed? That by the preaching of the gospel the Holy Ghost may draw the hearts of sinners to Jesus, that they may be delivered from this evil world with all the judgments that hang over it: that they may be one with Christ Himself even now, in acceptance and life and hope: and that when He shall appear they may appear with Him in glory. Even here, my brethren, we have an assurance of His love, a knowledge of Himself, and a fellowship with His joy, which sustains, and more than sustains, under all the ills of the present life. How the apostle Paul could challenge everything visible and invisible to rob him of what God's own love in Christ Jesus had bestowed! "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He recounts all that the heart so shrinks from-tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, the sword-and exclaims, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. 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." Rom. 8:37-39

To sing a song of triumph such as this is worth immeasurably more than to have one's bodily diseases cured, or one's temporal circumstances improved. Men vainly strive to bring their circumstances to their mind; but he who knows Christ has got in Him a treasure that not only brings the mind contentedly to the circumstances, but lifts the heart above all circumstances, into fellowship with Christ's own joy and blessedness, and into fellowship with the Father's joy in Him. Oh, that you all knew Him! Would that we who do know Him, knew Him more.

The Living Christ

There is now the living Christ at the right hand of God for us to know, to look down upon us, and for us to look up to for communion; to serve, love and adore, to wait for and to be with forever. All our blessings for time and eternity are bound up in Him. We can have no higher elevation of thought, no occupations of heart and mind that can exceed or even reach to occupation with him who is the second Man and the last Adam. He is excellent above angels and all of God's Creation, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead is pleased to dwell. It is for Christians to say like Paul, "That I may know Him" (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1 and 2; Heb. 1)

The Love of It

The Word of God should not only be a check on our thoughts, but the source of them, which is a far deeper thing. We see it in Christ, the only perfect One. He only could say, "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer." Psalm 17:4. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11.

There is a preserving power in the Word to keep the feet from sliding, which only those who receive the truth in the love of it can know. Merely having the Word hid in the memory and mind will not do. There is no preserving power in that. There must be the action of the truth on the heart and conscience separating from all defilement; otherwise, its preserving power cannot be experienced.

My Best Days Are yet to Come

A beautiful, bright girl of fifteen was suddenly confined to a bed of suffering, completely paralyzed on one side and nearly blind. She heard the family doctor whisper to her parents as they stood by the bedside, "She has seen her best days, poor child!" "No, doctor," she exclaimed, "my best days are yet to come, when I shall see the King in His beauty."

The Character of Nehemiah

We see in Nehemiah himself a heart touched with the affliction of his people, a precious token of the grace of God; and He who had produced this feeling disposed the king's heart to grant Nehemiah all he desired for the good of the people and of Jerusalem. We see also in Nehemiah a heart that habitually turned to God, that sought its strength in Him, and thus surmounted the greatest obstacles. The time in which Nehemiah labored for the good of his people was not one of those brilliant phases which awake the energies of faith and even the energy of man, imparting to it their own luster. It was a period which required the perseverance that springs from a deep interest in the people of God, because they are His people; a perseverance which, for this very reason pursues its object in spite of the contempt excited by the work, apparently so insignificant, but which is no less the work of God, and which pursues it in spite of the hatred and opposition of enemies, and the faintheartedness of fellow laborers (chap. 4:8, 10, 11); a perseverance which, giving itself up entirely to the work, baffles all the intrigues of the enemy, and avoids every snare, God taking care of those who trust in Him. It is also a beautiful feature in Nehemiah's character, that in spite of his high office he had all the detail of service so much at heart, and all that concerned the upright walk of God's people.

This history shows us first of all how, when God acts, faith stamps its own character on all who surround it. The Jews, who had so long left Jerusalem desolate, are quite disposed to recommence the work. Judah, however, is discouraged by the difficulties. This brings out the perseverance which characterizes true faith when the work is of God, be it ever so poor in appearance. The whole heart is in it because it is of God. Encouraged by Nehemiah's energy, the people are ready to work and fight at the same time. For faith always identifies God and His people in the heart. And this becomes a spring of devotedness in all concerned.

Let us remark that in times of difficulty faith does not show itself in the magnificence of the result, but in love for God's work, however little it may be, and in the perseverance with which it is carried on through all the difficulties belonging to this state of weakness; for that with which faith is occupied is the city of God and the work of God, and these things have always the same value, whatever may be the circumstances in which they are found

Noah's Preaching

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.". 1 Pet. 3:18-20.

Much erroneous teaching as to Christ's preaching to spirits in prison has been built upon the misuse of this passage. Let us remember that Peter was writing to Christian Jews who were but a small and despised company saved out of the mass of the nation. It was as much as to say, "Do not be discouraged; even in the days of Noah's preaching, when the long-suffering of God waited so long, only eight souls were saved."

It was the Spirit of Christ in Noah who preached to them before the flood, when they were alive. We have the same expression in chapter 1:11: the "Spirit of Christ" in the Old Testament prophets testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. In Gen. 6:3 we have the contrast between flesh and the Spirit (of God), where we read, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh."

The idea that Christ went and preached to spirits in prison between His death and resurrection is quite a mistake. But the spirits of the men to whom the testimony was rendered through Noah in his day, are now "in prison" awaiting judgment, because they are unbelieving as to the testimony given by the Spirit of Christ through Noah, when they were alive.

Objects of Love

I find reasons for delighting in that expression, again and again repeated, "That disciple whom Jesus loved"; and delighting also in the thought that such a truth has its illustration among the saints now, as it did in the midst of the apostles in earlier days. The love with which we have to do is too perfect to be partial. It does not act irregularly or carelessly. We are all the objects of it. Thomas is not neglected because John is thus loved. May the fact that we, too, are the beloved of the Lord fill our hearts with ever-increasing happiness and appreciation.

The Old Paths - the Good Way

It has been said that the first generation buys the truth, the second enjoys it, and the third squanders it. As we trace this principle through many families we see the truth of it borne out. The grandfather was saved and gathered out to the Lord's name, often at great cost. Fathers followed in his steps, but sometimes the children-for one reason or another-gave it up.

When we look into the Old Testament at the history of the children of Israel, we find that man is ever consistent in this principle. Time after time we read of a turning back to God-a revival that would find them cleaving to the Lord in faith and obedience. But before long there was a despising of the Word of the Lord-a mingling among the nations-so that they were as those who knew not God.

The secret of blessing and peace for God's people in all times has been their separation to the Word of God. When this is given up, the drift away begins (Heb. 2:1).

For our own exercise and profit, let us look at two underlying causes for this giving up of that which earlier generations counted dear. May this be used to alert some reader to "turn again."

First of all, there is a natural hankering after something new. We live in a day when that which is old, even though tried and proven, has been brought under suspicion. People question whether the old ways really are the best ways-whether old truths can still be acted upon. Our children in the public schools are taught to question the standards of their parents, and this attitude spills over into the things of God.

New freedom, new morality, new styles, new fashions, new ideas and new evangelism are terms that appeal. Something new and different; we are told, is necessary to make Christianity relevant in our times. It is amazing how often this thought is expressed today and how deeply concerned many are about arresting it by making Christianity acceptable to modern man by revamping and revising it. The Scripture in Acts 17 comes to mind, where the Athenians were described as people who "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some NEW thing."

There is a Scripture that ought to be grasped, memorized and lived by all of our young people, for it expresses a great truth, indeed, a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance: "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16).

This, I suppose, was not any more popular in Jeremiah's day than it is today. But the popularity of a Scripture does not alter its truth. Here it stands, introduced by a "Thus saith the Lord," given by divine inspiration from the throne of God Himself, telling us for all generations, and for all ages to come, "Ask for the old paths... and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Was there an eager acceptance of this key to peace and blessing? The answer is given in the last part of the same verse: "We will not walk therein... We will not hearken." Their whole concern was for the moment-the satisfaction of their own desires, with no thought as to obeying the Word of the Lord. Everyone was doing that which was right in his own eyes for his own pleasure; but oh! the

awful price they paid!

Christendom is rent asunder with this same spirit of modernism. Hundreds of divisions have fragmented the body of believers-many brought about because of the refusal to follow in the paths of the early church as presented in the Scriptures. We are thus surrounded by organizations that have supplanted the Holy Spirit, but were established as a better way to make Christianity relevant, thus setting themselves apart from the body of believers.

But the Scriptures declare that there is one body, of which all believers are a part; and we have been instructed to maintain that testimony. (See Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 4:3, 4.) Remember too that we do not find our Lord commending His people for success, but for faithfulness (Luke 12:42, 43 Cor. 4:2).

The second reason why the children may not seek the old paths that earlier generations have walked in, is that they have seen no joy in such a course. The parents have not adorned the doctrine (Titus 2:10); their lives have not attracted their children to seek the same path. How would the children be encouraged to follow a hard, legal and unhappy way where there is no joy? What a sad commentary on those who, of all people, ought to live in the atmosphere of joy.

It is not easy to be a faithful Christian in a Godless world, but it is our Lord's desire that our joy be full now (John 16:24; 15:11; 17:13). He has put a new song in our mouth (Psalm 40:3), and nothing shall separate us from His love (Rom. 8:39). Is it any wonder that the Apostle Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice"? Phil. 4:4.

May He give us the desire and the grace to search out the old paths, and walk in them, for peace, rest and blessing are to be found there.

Beloved, may you and I buy the truth, and so adorn the doctrine that our children will observe by our lives that we serve a good Master, and that it is a joy to follow in the path of His choosing

One Spirit With the Lord

How blessed is the truth that we are one with Him, His body; able to say to Him, "Ah, Lord, Thou knowest who and what Thou art, and I, the least of Thy members, am one with Thee. Oh, teach me, Lord, to know and to realize the wondrous mystery of the truth that I am in Thee and Thou in me-the truth of this unity of the body." It is that one's heart feeds and muses on. Oh, look to it that your hearts be occupied with and feeding upon that blessed truth, that we are one spirit with the Lord.

Our Great Need

You will never grow, you will never make progress, you will never develop as a Christian if you neglect your Bible. With purpose of heart cleave to the Lord, and let one evidence of your cleaving be that from now on you will never permit a day to go by, that you do not spend some time over your Bible; and as you open it, lift your eyes to Him who wrote it, and ask God to reveal His mind and will to you in His Word. Seek grace to walk in obedience to His will. There is no other way to blessing.

Our Standing

Do not be afraid of full grace. Be sure that it does not mar holiness; whatever deadens the conscience does, but this does not. Would a child's sense of a mother's love weaken its desire to please her? And as to power which we need, in grace alone it is found; then press consistency with our calling as much as you please; you cannot do better. Fellowship in the heart with Christ keeps the sense of our standing in Christ steady, and is the saving power of the heart practically in our walk. May He, oh, may He keep us near Himself!

Overcoming the World

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John 5:4, 5.

Worldliness is a terrible hindrance to the saint. We have the three-fold opposition-the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is opposed to the Father, as the flesh opposes the Spirit, and the devil opposes Christ.

The difficulty lies in not maintaining nearness to Christ, which the world would come in and hinder. Then I am open to all sorts of error, for I shall not take the trouble to be right if I am not near Christ.... Gehazi in the king's court is a sad spectacle; his heart had drawn in the spirit of the world, and he was able to entertain the world with accounts of the mighty actings of the Spirit. The world must be entertained, and it will be entertained with religion if it cannot get anything else.

All that I know of the world's path, spirit, affections, and conduct, is that it has crucified my Lord, not in its affections and lusts merely, but by wicked hands it has crucified my Master. Suppose it were but yesterday that you had seen Pontius Pilate the governor, and the high priests, and the elders putting Christ to death-would you feel happy today in holding communion with them? The stain of Christ's blood is as fresh in God's sight as if it had been done but yesterday; the time which has elapsed since makes no difference in its moral guilt.

The question then is, Am I to get under the power of this world, or am I to overcome it (in my heart I mean)? When Christ was down here in all the beauty and attractive grace in which God the Father could delight, there was not found in the world one thought or sentiment of common interest or feeling with Him. The world in all its classes-rulers, priests, Pharisees, and the multitudes-have all been associated in hanging the Son of God upon a gibbet. Such is the world's heart. If I have seen the glory of Christ's Person, and see that He is the very Son of God who came down and was turned out by the world, can I be happy with it? The link between the natural thoughts and affections and the world exists in every heart; so that in all kinds of things, even in walking through the streets, I constantly find that which attracts my eye, and my eye affects my heart.

Nothing will overcome the world in my heart but the deep consciousness of how it has treated Christ. Take my children, for instance. Do I want them to get on well in the world? Must I have good places for them in it? Nothing but knowing the place Christ had in it will overcome the world in my heart. There is no possibility of getting on with God unless the world is given up, and the heart is satisfied with Christ. Christ must be everything.

Look at Abraham's history. He sojourned in a strange country where he had not a place so much as to set his foot on. So we are not of the world, and this is the test of our affections; for as we are not at once taken out of the evil, we must have our hearts exercised to godliness. It is very easy to overcome the world when the love of Christ has made it distasteful. Satan is the god of this world. Perhaps you will say, This is true of the heathen world. Yes; but it is true of the whole world,

although it was not till after the rejection of Christ that it was brought out-it was true before.

God had spoken by His servants and prophets, and the world had beaten one, and stoned another, and killed another; then He said, "I will send My beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him." But they crucified Him, thus proving that Satan was the master of man. So the Lord said, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." You will not have spiritual discernment or power of motive unless the heart be kept near to Christ. I shall not want the world if Christ is in my heart; if my delight is in that in which God delights-that is, in Christ-then I can overcome. "Whether therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

What! must I do everything to Christ? Oh, that very question proves a heart away from Christ, showing it is bondage for you to do all to the glory of God. It is not that we are to scorn the world in the least, for God's grace is for every poor sinner that will receive it. It is the spirit of the world in my own heart which I have to overcome-that which my heart is in danger of being led by... We are to overcome the world. The heart, resting on, looking to, eating, feeding on Christ, gets the consciousness of what the world is, and overcomes.

The Lord keep us in humble dependence on Himself. His grace is sufficient for us; His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Paul: a Good Conscience Before God

Acts 22

The Holy Spirit often puts Paul forward because in him are manifested the ways of the heart, and this under grace. He displayed a patience truly admirable in caring for the Church. We can sound the ways of God and of the human heart in the history that the Holy Spirit has given us of Paul. He had an immense activity and great force of character. This chapter contains circumstances which show what a good conscience before God is.

If the conscience is not good, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and some, having put it away, have even made shipwreck concerning faith. If a child has offended his father, he is no more at ease before him, and cannot open his heart.

In the history of Paul we see his conversion in verses 3-16. Then he is in a trance (vv. 17-21), in which the Lord commands him to depart from Jerusalem. It is for Him to regulate these things. Paul in his answer says to the Lord that he is precisely the man suited to bear witness for Him at Jerusalem. I have persecuted Thee, and they know it; will they not see in me the efficacy of Thy grace? Such was the reasoning of Paul. But the Lord takes no account of it.

That which strikes one most is that Paul, because his conscience was perfectly purged before God, recalls to the Lord all his iniquity. It is necessary that it should be thus, if we would dare to speak to God in detail of all our offenses, of all our sins. There is a false repose in a child of God when the conscience is not perfectly good and opened out before God. Paul displays before the eyes of the Lord all the detail of his sin. He does not confine himself to saying, Thou knowest all; he puts all before God, without having the idea that anything can be imputed to him. He talks about his sins as of an affair irrevocably settled. He can even present these sins as being a motive for an apostle, for bearing testimony to Jesus in Jerusalem. Paul reasons with the Lord as a person with his intimate friend. This is what Ananias also does (Acts 9:13-16).

When God has purified the conscience for us by His perfect grace, the interests of Jesus are ours. Jesus is no longer our judge; He has taken our sins, He has suited us to Himself, having taken our cause in hand. Instead of seeing in Jesus our judge, we see Him as a friend. Instead of being afraid of Christ, we are full of confidence in Him, because we are assured of His love. There is a complete change in the heart.

The reasoning of Paul was true, as we see in 1 Tim. 1:15. God had prepared Paul in that he had been the greatest enemy of the Lord Jesus, and chief of sinners; because if Paul had spoken of other things than God's righteousness by faith and man's perfect pardon on believing God's testimony concerning His Son, his mouth must have been closed.

Peter was prepared by denying Christ, which is even worse than being His enemy. That closed his mouth for every other thing than preaching grace. They had, the one and the other, a profound conviction of sin. If we would be strong and bear testimony to grace, we need to have the sense of

the evil from which God has taken us up. If the occasion presents itself, we can speak before men of our sins, provided that all has been laid clearly before God. The Christian converts at Ephesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, brought their books of magic and confessed all their actions. If the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we have more shame for our sins before God than before men. To have a good conscience we must keep the conscience pure. Paul exercised himself to have in everything a conscience without offense toward God and man. When we have grieved the Holy Spirit, we do not feel the love of God in the same way. A conscience defiled cannot be at its ease before God; and when God enters, there are dark corners that one hides from Him. Impossible then to have that perfect confidence in reasoning with God as with a friend (see 1 John 3:19-21). If we have beforehand the sense of our feebleness, we shall be forced to seek strength in God.

Can we with boldness recall before God all we have thought, said and done? To be unable to do so, is not to be in the presence of God; to do so is to recall to God His immense grace in having pardoned us. Without Christ, who would venture such things? Sin hidden corrupts the heart, hardens the conscience, and renders us blind and proud. It is of all importance for us that our conscience should be entirely emptied before God. We can afterward forget these things; we shall not be judged because of it. Be diligent to have a pure conscience before God and men.

Paul's Voyage: Trusting the Promises

Acts 27 is a very long chapter that occupies itself about a matter which, in human calculation, we might have said and thought could have well afforded to give place to other things in Paul's testimony. But "Wisdom is justified." The ways and methods of wisdom, as well as her judgments and counsels, are all "justified of her children."

This chapter, together with a part of the following one, gives us an account of the apostle's voyage from Syria to Italy, and his short journey onward from the seashore to Rome. The simple fact that great space is given to this in the history of The Acts of the Apostles, alone might lead us to judge that the Spirit has a mind or purpose in it beyond the mere acquainting of us with a fact; and so we shall find it.

It is true that the whole chapter is morally valuable in this sense, that it gives us a strong view and impression of Christianity to be found in all the ordinary circumstances and casualties of life; that the palpable, tangible world in which we find our present life and exercise, is the very scene in which the Spirit had His witnesses.

But we may expect to find in this chapter even more than these things—more than either one fact in Paul's history, or this moral instruction to which I have referred.

The company had been removed from the ship in which they had sailed from the coast of Syria into another that was bound for Italy (v. 6). But shortly after, dangers began to threaten, and Paul gets an intimation that the voyage would be with damage and hazard (v. 10).

This he had, I judge, by the Spirit. He does not gather it from the winds and waves. It is only the authority of the Holy Spirit that could have warranted a stranger, a landsman, a prisoner too, to speak on such a subject with authority, opposing the judgment of "the owner," and "the master," and "the more part." The rest, on the contrary, were directed by providence, so called. The south wind blew softly, and they supposed that they had obtained their purpose (v. 13). And so they sailed on. But a tempestuous wind quickly followed the soft southern breeze, unexpected by those who looked around, but confirming the witness of him who learned his lesson from the Spirit (v. 14).

But the tempestuous wind seems only to drive the apostle into his harbor more closely. He learns the mind of God, and comes forth laden with the glorious harvest that he had gathered (v. 21). He rebukes them for not having heeded his former word; but, in the abounding grace of Him whom he served, and for whom he now witnessed, he pledges the safety of all who sailed with him in

the ship (vv. 22-26).

The prisoner is thus the savior. He who was on his way to appear before the power of this world, and in chains, is the vessel for bearing the truth, the grace, and the power of Him that is above the world. This is after the pattern of the crucified One being the life of the world. This is weakness made strong. This is praise perfected in the mouths of babes and sucklings. This is the mystery of

God's salvation in a world that has destroyed itself. Paul the prisoner is the savior. The lives of all are given to him who was in chains. The most despised one is the one whom the Lord of life and light and glory owns. And such a one gets all God's secrets. "Howbeit," says he, "we must be cast upon a certain island." He knew the detail as well as the mere fact of safety. And he believed, in spite of all appearances, and with confidence pledged the truth of the divine promise and grace.

Here indeed was God and His saint. Paul, after this, allows much to be done in the vessel. There was a sounding, a casting of anchors out from the stern, and a lightening the ship (vv. 28, 29). And he gives great encouragement and cheer of heart (vv. 33-38). But he will have nothing to be trusted but the promise. If the boat be resorted to, confidence is at once placed in other resources, in provisions of safety independent of God, and then the promise will be rejected, and death must follow. The waters will swallow all who are not in the ark of the promise. But according to the same promise, the ship goes to pieces. It is worth nothing-never to be used again. But the lives are spared. Not a hair of the head of any perishes. Some swim, some float on planks, but all get their life according to the promise that they should be safe who were in the company with Rome's prisoner, but God's witness and treasurer. "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."

In all this, further notices of the divine mystery show themselves. There is a voice in it all, which may be heard. We have already noticed the prisoner as the savior-the despised and bound one in the scene being the only vessel of all the true glory and blessing that was there. How sensibly, how visibly, how audibly all that meets the eye and the ear and the heart of him that is taught of God. It needs no interpreter. It is full of God's way, as I have already observed.

But here we have even more than that. The vessel goes to pieces. The lives of all are preserved. But it was not the vessel, but the promise that preserved the travelers. They had been committed to the ship; but the ship breaks asunder, and the promise is their ark in the waters again. All stewardships fail and prove unfaithful. The Church as the witness or candlestick, is broken and removed in the end; but that which is of God Himself-His truth, His love, His promise- survives as fresh and perfect as ever. None who trust in Him, and in Him alone, shall ever be confounded. The voyage may end in a complete wreck. The dispensation may end in apostasy; but all who hang on the promise, all who trust the word of man's Prisoner, God's Messenger, survive. Some swim, others float on planks. Some may be strong and work their way more in the solitary strength of the Spirit, others weaker may hang about fragments that float around on the surface here and there, inviting the timid and the unskilled; but whether they swim or rest on the planks, all, strong and weak together, reach the shore; they cannot perish, for the God of the promise has them in His hand, and no wind or wave can dash them thence.

Is there not then, I ask, a parable or mystery in all this? This is not Paul's voyage only, but ours. It is the safety of wrecked mariners, the safety of all believers who trust in the promise, and the God of the promise; it is the security of a poor, helpless, and tossed soul who has by faith found his way, and taken refuge in the sanctuary of peace, though all props and stays here fail him. Cisterns may be broken, but the fountain is as fresh and full as ever. Chorazin and Bethsaida may disappoint the Lord, but the Father does not. Hymenaeus and Philetus may disappoint Paul, but God's foundations do not. "All men forsook me," says he on a great occasion, "notwithstanding the Lord stood with me." And the psalmist in triumph exclaims, "If the foundations be destroyed, what

can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple." Yes; the way to magnify our security is to see it in the midst of perils and alarms. The very depth of the waters around honored the strength and sufficiency of the ark to Noah; the ruthlessness of the sword in passing through Egypt, glorified the blood that was sheltering the firstborn of Israel; and the solemn terrors of the coming day of the Lord will but enhance the safety and the joy of the ransomed, whether with Jesus in the heavens, or as the remnant in their "chambers" in the land.

Peace With Gibeon

See Josh. 9

If we are acting faithfully, to every step of faithfulness the Lord will surely add more light; only it behooves us to take counsel of the Lord at every step. Peace with Gibeon only deprives us of victory, and brings upon us other wars and troubles; for the presence of what is not of God always opens the door to Satan. This, perhaps, is not so much felt when the soul is full of vigor, but when there is decline, then the evil and its consequence is felt.

In the days of David, there was a famine three years; it was for Saul and for his bloody house, because he had slain the Gibeonites. All this arose from the little act of not taking counsel with God. When all was war, it appeared a convenient thing, a blessing, to find some peace and recognition from those who said, The Lord your God. It sounded like Rahab's believing voice; and in appearance, with these far-distant travelers, there was nothing wrong in peace-they were not of the forbidden and accursed race. But they asked not counsel of the Lord; and it turned out that they were of the accursed race, and it almost separated between Joshua and the people. So cunning is the enemy, it is almost as bad, or worse, to lean on one's own wisdom in the ways of God, as on one's own strength in the battles of God; peace with Gibeon and war with Ai end in defeat, or in confusion and shame.

The Penman of Revelation

In the progress of the book of Revelation, we see John moved by different affections. He trembles in chapter 1:17; he weeps in chapter 5:4; he wonders with great astonishment in chapter 17:6; he loses himself in worshiping delight in chapters 19:10 and 22:8.

That is, he trembles in the presence of the judicial glory of the Son of man; he weeps at the sight of a sealed book which had it been unsealed, would have told secrets about Jesus; he marvels at the sight of Christendom's apostasy; he loses himself in joy when he hears of the marriage of the Lamb, and when he sees the bride of the Lamb.

What suited affections! what creations of the Holy Spirit in the soul of a saint! He never trembles after the One who was alive tells him not to fear. He that had the keys of death and hades encourages him; and that, surely, is enough for us.

The Permanent and the Passing Away

Doubting and inconsistency, sorrow and pain and trial are not permanent. A few more turns of the clock and swings of the pendulum, and then farewell forever to sin and failures. Farewell to doubts and fears-a final farewell. We are to be conformed to the image of His Son. We shall be ushered into the reign of light and of eternal realities. Then goodbye Faith. Farewell Hope. I am launched out into one great eternal sea of love. Faith and Hope make very good companions on the road, but not for eternity. They go with us to the gate, but Love is inside. GOD is Love.

We shall be plunged into the ocean of love, lost in it, never to come out. It is shoreless, bottomless and infinite. We shall soon be in a region where we shall know as known, and there will not be a thought or a feeling which will be unlike Christ. No trouble or sorrow; all will have passed away. The first thousand years in glory will roll along with Hallelujah to the Lamb! Another comes, and we are still praising the Lord together. The pendulum of praise never ceases to swing. He will be the Object of our adoring praise and worship forever. Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! How long art thou? Not too long to gaze on the Lamb. Then the permanent. Nothing but Christ-the Christ of God, forever, forever and forever. Amen.

The Priesthood of Christ

The present service of the Lord Jesus for His redeemed is presented to us in a double way- first as our High Priest with God for all that connects with our condition in weakness here, and then as Advocate with the Father in case of sin. The epistle to the Hebrews gives us His priesthood; the epistle of John, His place as Advocate. Priesthood we find from Hebrews is founded on the work the Lord Jesus has accomplished on the cross, where for the moment He was both Priest and victim (chap. 2:17). "A merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation [propitiation] for the sins of the people."

It is important to note that the place of priesthood has nothing to do with any question of sin, being only taken, up on the ground of an eternal redemption that has put away sin forever for God and the faith of our souls. A merciful and faithful High Priest exercises it for us that we may not sin, sin being looked at as hopeless apostasy in the epistle. It is too sadly possible that we may sin, nor does the service of the Lord Jesus fail for us in that case; but then it is as Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

Priesthood with God is for weakness, which is our condition as long as we are here. It supposes then a justified and delivered people, as Israel were in type when brought to God through the Red Sea, with the wilderness lying before us, and the rest and glory of God at the end. He who is our Moses, the leader of our salvation, is conducting us there as the sons of God (chap. 2:10); whom He has brought to His own ground as set forth in the risen Man, Christ Jesus, the sanctifier and the sanctified all of one, not ashamed to call them His brethren, in the midst of whom He can take His place to lead us in our song of redemption (Exod. 15) at the very opening of the path (v. 13). The path in which He would sustain us by priesthood is His own in which He has gone before us, opened out in three great characteristics of it in the epistle: perfect dependence, "I will put my trust in Him" (v. 13); obedience learned by the things He suffered (chap. 5:8); and faith, of which He is the great prototype (chap. 12:2).

So much as to the epistle generally, and the Christian's place in it, will help as to the precious details of the service of priesthood in which He is ever in love actively engaged for us. And first, "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." With what reality it brings Him before us as having been in our path, to know that He was tempted. At the very opening of His public path in the gospels He had to meet the temptations of Satan in the wilderness. His perfection is seen in that He suffered being tempted; with Him the effect of the presentation of anything contrary to God was only to produce suffering. With us, if not by faith reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin, and walking in the Spirit as the power of the deliverance that Christ has wrought for us, there is the horrible answer of the flesh within to the temptation presented from without. There was none such with Him; He suffered being tempted, and that is the absolute opposite of sinning. "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;" as Peter says in his first epistle (chap. 4:1), exhorting us to arm ourselves with the same mind as Christ. Tempted we shall be, but just at the point in which in weakness we take sides with God against

ourselves, refusing the evil, the mighty succor of the Lord comes in to our support, lest weakness without support should turn to willfulness and sin.

In Aaron's garments of glory and beauty in type he bore the names of the children of Israel engraved upon the onyx stones on the shoulders of strength and also upon the breastplate of judgment upon his heart. We have the reality of both as we consider the High Priest of our confession. For besides strength to succor as in chapter 2, chapter 4 brings out the wonderful sympathy of His heart. "We have not a high priest which cannot be touched ["who cannot sympathize" is the literal translation] with the feeling of our infirmities [weaknesses]; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin [or sin apart]." I use the word "weaknesses" because there is but one word to express our two English words, "weakness" and "infirmity" in Greek. There is no shade of any other meaning than weakness in the passage. The last clause excludes what is sinful. Besides, no Christian would look for the sympathy of the Lord Jesus with what had that character. Weakness is not sinful. Christ was crucified in weakness. We have to be reduced to it as Paul in 2 Cor. 12, who glories in it because of the proved strength of Christ made perfect in it. It is in weakness that our path has to be made good for God in the midst of temptations, subject to the assaults of the enemy, in the teeth of the opposition of every principle of man and his world, in need of patience in carrying out the will of God, in danger of being wearied and faint in our minds, and through varied exercise. How •blessed that there is not a detail of our weakness, under every form of trial and testing, that Jesus, our great High Priest, the Son of God, who is passed through the heavens, does not enter into in the perfect sympathy of a human heart on the throne of God, and with all the divine strength of His compassion. So that the throne where He sits becomes a throne of grace where we can come boldly with every phase of need and obtain mercy and grace for reasonable succor.

But the question may arise, How can one so exalted as the Son of God enter into all the details of His people's weakness and need down here? The answer is given us in chapter 5. He has been here, and in circumstances of pressure and sorrow such as never fell to the lot of man beside. Not that He is in them now. For it is a common mistake that I must be in the same circumstances as another to be able to sympathize. It is not true. If in them myself, I am not so free to enter into those of another. But if I have been in them, and am now out of them, I can fully sympathize with those of another. How infinite the love and grace that brought the Son of God into the path of testing, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" for His piety, that is, His meek submission to God. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." It is Gethsemane that comes before us, with all its unfathomable sorrow, the last and most crucial of all the scenes of testing and trial He had to go through, and that fitted Him perfectly for our hearts to be all we need in our High Priest. Out of His own deep experience of human sorrow and trial, we have the consciousness that there is nothing that we have to pass through that He cannot enter into, to sustain us as we walk in the same path of His obedience.

But the truth of priesthood goes farther. I do not here refer to the order of it as that of Melchisedec, proved to be superior to that of Aaron by so many points of contrast in chapter 7, because the present exercise of it is analogous to Aaron's as having to do with the sanctuary. The Melchisedec priesthood will not be in exercise till He comes out in manifested glory, and takes His place as

priest upon His throne. But at the close of chapter 6, He is presented as having entered within the veil, and that as our forerunner. So that, not only have we the immutability of God's counsel confirmed by an oath, as Abraham for the fulfillment of promise-and we are just where he was as to the rest and glory of God-but we have a personal guarantee for its fulfillment in the place "whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec"; and this also gives us the sanctuary of God as the refuge and home of our hearts. He had, indeed, first of all secured all that was needed for us in the way of succor and sympathy for the path through the wilderness, but this was our side of things. Now He seeks to conduct our hearts to where He is, to His side of things in the bright scene of God's presence, so that we be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Nor is He inactive there, for we are still on the way, and love engages Him in His unchangeable priesthood to be ever occupied with us, "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (chap. 7:25). It is thus the dependent life of Christ in us is sustained by the resources of grace and strength that are ministered to us by His priestly intercession and service. Were that exercise of priesthood to cease for a moment, we should soon find out where we were, and how dependent we are upon it. But it is not possible. It says, "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us, as if He had nothing else to do but to think of and care for us. All our resources thus being derived moment by moment from what Christ is, "made higher than the heavens" (7:26), we are prepared for what I may speak of as the full positive side of priesthood, which we hear from chapters 8-10, and which carries us in heart and spirit into the heavenly scenes themselves. For as the epistle says (8:1), "Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum [or summing up]: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," of which the tabernacle in this world was but the type and shadow (v. 5). But if the perfect heavenly sanctuary of God's presence is what is in question now, there is a perfect sacrifice that answers to it (chap. 9:11-14), and that introduces us there as perfected worshipers, having no more conscience of sins. It is the witness of the Holy Ghost to the work of the Son of God to make good the counsels of the divine will that gives us this perfect conscience, our sins and iniquities remembered no more (chap. 10:1-17).

And now (v. 19) the Spirit of God summons us to take up our place before God accordingly. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest [sanctuary] by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a high priest [as it is now] over the house of God; let us draw near." Thus once more Christ is presented to us as priest when He appears representatively for us in the presence of God (see 9:24), giving us a home link to connect our hearts in the most intimate way with all that is there. The house of God over which He is Priest consists as we know from chapter 3, of all who are Christ's, "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Each true Christian then has this wondrous place of unhindered access to God in the sanctuary of His own presence. "With a true heart," it is added and "in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Applied typically we have the two parts of the consecration of the priests. First we have perfect rest of conscience and heart as to all the past in the presence of God through the blood of Christ, and second the water of the Word applied to bring us into a nature capable of enjoying and free to

enjoy that holy presence. We are in truth a consecrated priesthood, but it was not the object of the epistle to bring out our priesthood, but that of Christ; and so it is left thus in the language of the type.

Nor do I seek to follow out the glorious consequences for us further. Let it suffice that all has been thus prepared for worship, only needing the added truth of the revelation of the Father, as in John 4, for it to burst forth from full hearts, who having access to God within the holiest, have gone forth without the camp, from all that was once instituted of God as a religion for men upon earth, to Christ, bearing His reproach (chap. 13:13).

May it be ours then by His grace to realize more and more, not merely the blessedness of having every need of our way in weakness through a wilderness world met by the priesthood of Christ, but of becoming more familiar with the sanctuary of which He is the minister, and the holy occupation of it that He connects us with and would maintain us in the enjoyment of, by His priesthood, when first by His work, finished on the cross, He has given us our title and fitness for the unclouded light of the presence of God.

Prosperity Is Not the Path of Faith

The Second Book of Samuel sets before us the definite establishment of David in the kingdom, and afterward, the miseries of his house when prosperity had opened the door to self-will.

The path of faith and its difficulties is that in which we walk with God, and in which we celebrate the triumph which His presence secures to us. A state of prosperity makes it evident how little man is able to enjoy it without its becoming a snare to him. Prosperity not being the path of faith, that is to say, of strength, the evil of the heart comes out in the walk. Compare 2 Sam. 22 (the psalm by which David closes the path of difficulty) with chapter 23, which contains his last words, after his experience of the enjoyment of the prosperity and glory in which faith had placed him.

Psalm 84

This psalm is the expression of the desires of those who had long been deprived of the joy of being in the courts of Jehovah during the captivity. It is the expression of the joy of seeing them again, and of taking the road which leads there even by the valley of weeping, of Baca. The Church also moves forward toward the tabernacle of God, but it is that which is not made by human hands.

The subject of each psalm is ordinarily expressed in the first verses. The tabernacles of Jehovah are His house. The faithful soul is there at home in his rest. One cannot find himself at rest when the object of the heart is still beyond the point we have reached, even were that place we have stopped the most desirable in the world. The first thing which is here presented to us is that the house of Jehovah is the Israelite's abiding place (vv. 1-4). "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee."

Blessed is "the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways," that is, the ways to Jehovah's house. Verse 4 contains our joy in hope; verse 5 contains actual experience along the way. Passing through Baca, they make it a spring; "The rain also filleth the pools (or, with blessings). They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God (each one will appear before God in Zion)"(J.N.D. Trans.). When we begin our course here below, we know God, and in time we learn also Him to know more; it is a feeling which grows and strengthens by communion. God has thereby bound the hearts of Christians. It is the manifestation and accomplishment of His love. For the more I know the perfectness of God, the more I know His love and the more also I feel how precious He is to my soul. If my knowledge of God is separated from the knowledge of the love of God, I have not the life of God. The highest perfection of God is manifested to the heart by the first visit He makes to the heart of sinners, and in this respect it cannot be known more by the most advanced child.

Here below the heart of man does not answer to the praise of God. One could not praise Him in the streets of a town; the heart of man is enmity against God. The children of God together enjoy God and prepare to go into a world to raise the voice of the gospel. It is the desire of the converted heart that God may be praised, and he will be fully satisfied in the house of God. It is impossible to find repose of soul till God is praised unceasingly by those that surround Him.

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee." If I have a difficulty, I in my feebleness have need of strength to sustain me in patient endurance. Peter without this strength denied Jesus. We may be weary when we act in our strength, for what is the strength of the flesh? When we act in the power of God, it is impossible. No creature can separate us from the power of God or the love of God. What is stronger? Jesus, ever dependent, was the strongest and overcame the world.

God has set our rest at the end of a path that we are treading; and it is good for us in order that we may make the experience of our own heart. It is the persons already redeemed who are on the road toward the rest of God. The word of God renders the thing surer than any other testimony

could. The way may be difficult, but we have the certainty that it is the road to the glory. God has told us that in this road we shall be despised by the world and in conflict with Satan. He has told us these things before, that, when they do come, we might believe His testimony to be true.

Here below we find not the rest but the way; but the way should be in our hearts. Thus the valley of Baca, a ruined earth, is changed into a fountain. If we are in communion with God, every difficulty becomes the occasion for the display of the glory of God (2 Thess. 1). The timid child finds joy in the assurance of its mother's love when some danger presents itself. We are often overwhelmed because our strength is not in God, who would have His grace sufficient for us. This is more precious than the removal of the thorn in the flesh. "The rain also filleth the pools." The rain comes not from the earth, but from heaven, to which we should be attached and whence we may expect everything. There is no such sense of refreshment here below, that I may know that God takes extra care of me, to give me water and manna and strength and in a word everything. It is a blessing that we should be thus brought low; He has not done so either to the Egyptians or to the Canaanites. We ought to live on that word which comes out of the mouth of God. (Deut. 8:2-5.)

The effect of these things is to make us "go from strength to strength." The difficulties are meant to make us know new strength on God's part. We are not actually capable of enjoying all that there is in God. Also all is not yet given us. God gets more place in our hearts. The empty or hard places of the heart are manifested, and God has to fill or clear them. The Lord God of hosts-that is to say, the God who governs all things, He who is faithful to His promises and who has all things at His disposal, the God of His people, God ever the same-presents Himself in three different ways. Jehovah or the Eternal, God of Jacob, and God of hosts. "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Thine anointed." There is the assurance, the pledge of divine favor. God regards us in Christ, and all that we ask of Him in the name of Jesus He will do.

It is better to be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the courts of the world. If our confidence is in man, we shall find ourselves sooner or later where man will fail us, and there is what Satan waits for in order to sift us. To trust in God is the hardest thing, as it lays the flesh under our feet and flesh can gain nothing by it, but it is inexpressible joy to the heart.

The Purpose and End of Chastening

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." Heb. 12:5.

Suppose the Lord's hand is upon you; the great principle is that He is doing it for your good. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Love would not do it if not needed. Do not despise it. God loves you too well to punish you for nothing. You say, "Oh, I do not despise it; my heart is sinking under it." Not so either. Do not faint; it is love that does it, and love will bring good out of it.

Mark, too, that we are to expect chastening; there is a great deal to correct. You may be as sincere as possible and, as to the purpose of your heart, single-eyed; but is there nothing hindering you. You may not know what it is. Would you wish God to leave it there? He knows the thoughts and intents of your heart when you do not. He is not a physician for nothing. No child is without chastening, bringing us nearer to God. We must all know how easily we get out of God's presence; and He does it for our benefit, that we may be partakers of His holiness, that holiness which is in God Himself.

Mark how thoroughly this is grace. He calls us according to His holiness, and then sets about making us partakers of it; and when all is done, there is "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Like Paul's thorn in the flesh, our very service and devotedness may bring us into suffering for His sake, and at the same time into that which humbles the flesh. The thorn was something that met him in his service, made him despicable, and was a correction to the tendency to be puffed up. God may give it the character of a trial for Christ.

Refuting the Claims of Evolution

In connection with "Facts vs. Theories," I have always found 1 Cor. 15:39 to be most helpful in refuting the claims of evolution. There it is written for our learning, that "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." Now, as always, faith must be operative in understanding the things of God, but here He surely tells us that the flesh of men and the flesh of beasts is NOT the same; so it necessarily follows that man could never have resulted from evolutionary changes in a beast. How vain the thought of man!

A Rejected but Coming Christ

We are the present companions of a rejected, absent, unworldly Christ. We recognize the world around us (which has seen and hated Him and His Father, as the Lord Himself says) as morally incurable, awaiting the judgment of His coming day. We look to meet Him in the air when the hour of His good pleasure to that end shall come; and when that is to be we do not know. And we reckon upon returning with Him, first to the execution of judgment, and then to the sharing with Him, in manifestation, the glory of His dominion in the world to come. These things form and define the proper attitude of the saints of this dispensation. It is easy to apprehend this; but to realize it we need simple, energetic faith in the power of the Holy Spirit-the faith that cherishes single-heartedness to Christ, and the love for Himself that ever keeps a welcome for Him in the heart.

Riches - Where?

A very wealthy man took a friend up to the top of his house to show him the extent of his possessions. Waving his hand about he said, "There, that is my estate." Then, pointing away, he asked, "Do you see that farm in the distance?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is mine." Pointing in another direction, he said, "Do you see that house?"

"Yes."

"That also belongs to me."

This time his friend pointed and asked, "Do you see that village away out there?"

"Yes."

"Well, there lives a poor woman in that village who can say more than all you have said." "What can she say?"

"She can say, 'Christ is mine!'"

The rich man looked very puzzled, and said no more. He was glorying in his earthly riches, but was not rich toward God. He was not one of those spoken of in Jas. 2:5 who are rich in faith. On the contrary, the poor woman had none of this world's riches, but had "unsearchable riches" in Christ. His riches might take wings and fly away, but her riches in Christ are everlasting, and no thief can steal them.

"Thus saith the LORD,... let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD." Jer. 9:23, 24.

Salt

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing." (Matt. 5:13).

A few grains of salt can often make the difference between a delicious, memorable meal and a complete cooking failure. Salt will melt ice to help prevent accidents, will make cut flowers last longer, will act as a cleansing agent, and will accomplish many useful tasks. Are we performing the duties of salt? Are we truly the salt of the earth?

At an informal gathering some young people were discussing the text, "Ye are the salt of the earth." One suggestion after another was made as to the meaning of salt in this verse. "Salt imparts a desirable flavor," said one. "Salt preserves from decay," another suggested. Then at last a Chinese Christian girl spoke out of an experience none of the others had. "Salt creates thirst," she said, and there was a sudden hush in the room. Everyone was thinking, "Have I made anyone thirsty for the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Seeing These Things Are so

"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Jas. 5:8.

The day of God's long-suffering is rapidly drawing to a close, and the day of wrath is at hand. The wheels of divine government are moving onward with a rapidity truly soul-subduing; human affairs are working to a point. There is an awful crisis approaching; precious souls are rushing forward along the surface of the stream of time into the boundless ocean of eternity. In a word, "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Now, seeing these things are so, let us ask each other, How are we affected thereby? What are we doing in the midst of the scene which surrounds us? How are we discharging our fourfold responsibility to the Lord, to the Church, to perishing sinners, to our own souls?

Seek First

The Word of God says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6:33. But with many it seems to be, Seek ye first the things of this world, and then, if you can, heavenly things. If you speak of our being heavenly, it provokes a smile. The Lord give us to know more of what our portion is in Christ.

Separation and Worship

In order to give Egypt such a character before God as would allow the display of His judgment, Egypt must have the blessing through Joseph; for it is despised or neglected blessing that matures sin. As the Lord says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and My Father"; that is, they had despised the riches of love and goodness. So Judas perfected his sin by remaining unmoved at the gift of the sop, the token of personal kindness. Thus another king arose "which knew not Joseph." Egypt had forgotten the goodness of God toward her by Joseph; thus her sin was full, and she was ripe for judgment. Without the previous ministry of Joseph, therefore, the fullness of her sin could not have come, as now the world is convinced of sin because they did not believe in Jesus.

This makes Egypt a sample of the world.

The exodus is the separation of the people of God from the world. And I was lately struck with this feature in the scene, that Israel was to go out of Egypt in order to serve, or hold, a feast to the Lord (Exod. 3:18; 5:1; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 9), for they could not serve Him or do sacrifice to Him in the land of their bondage and before that people (8:25-27). Their religious service was of such a character that Egypt would not tolerate it. It was something that so entirely went across all the thoughts of that people that they would persecute and destroy them if they were the witnesses of it. They must therefore go forth.

Now what a character does this simple fact give Egypt or the world! God had no sanctuary there. The thoughts and ways of that land were so opposed to Him that He could not set His name among them. His people must go forth ere they could open His temple or raise His altar, because the very things which Israel would, as it were, sacrifice or crucify, Egypt was wont to worship (8:26, 27). Israel must therefore be separated from Egypt before they could hold their feast to the Lord.

And so it was afterward. There was a fence all around the Holy Land, a wall of partition that separated Israel in Canaan from the nations. No stranger could eat the Passover, no uncircumcised one could hold the feast of the Lord. And so it is still. We must worship "in spirit and in truth." No man can call on God aright but by the Spirit which gives adoption, nor call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit. Just as Israel had to separate from the Egyptians and had to distinguish themselves from all nations by circumcision, so today it is still on the principle of separation that God is to be served or worshiped.

The wall of partition now is different, it is true; the place outside the land is not a mere desert, it is true; but the place of service is as distinct as ever it was. "Ye must be born again." "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." "To whom coming, as unto a living stone,... ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood." Here is the desert, the separated place, the sanctuary of God, within the partition wall. The Holy Spirit raises it now. Union with Christ forms it; and within that place the abominations of the world are sacrificed

now, as the abominations of Egypt were sacrificed in the desert of old. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are to be crucified there, though they are all of the world.

And what was the full feast which Israel held to the Lord when they got out into the desert? Why, it was actually furnished to them by Egypt herself. As soon as they stood on the banks of the Red Sea, they began to hold their feast. They did not wait to reach the mountain (Exod. 3:12). It is quite true they did afterward serve, or do sacrifice to God, under that mountain (Exod. 19-40; Lev. 1-9). But Egypt herself gave them a song before they reached the appointed place. Egypt was bold enough to resist them so far as to follow them into the very jaws of the Red Sea. Her enmity was perfect; but all this ended in giving Israel a song of triumph over Egypt (Exod. 15). Before they reached the place to which they had been called, this joy was theirs. And so with us, beloved. Satan has done his worst, but Jesus by death and resurrection has overthrown him. Had not Satan drawn out his chariots and his horses, all the strength and power of his kingdom, to the hill of Calvary, the song which the resurrection puts into our mouths would not have been ours. But it is ours now, and he can never silence it. It has been raised by himself, and he can never silence it; and we too carry the echo of it in our hearts all through the place till we reach the mountain of the Lord. In this sense Egypt gave Israel that song; in this sense the god of this world gives our hearts this song; for the eater himself yields meat, the strong man himself, sweetness.

And let me add that what livingly and practically separates us day by day from the world is communion with Jesus. Faith, or the Spirit, or the new nature, is the first great exodus -our first going into the wilderness out of Egypt to hold our feast to the Lord -our act of separation from the world; but the place of separation can be maintained daily only by communion with Jesus, through the same Spirit who first drew us out.

The History of Simon Peter: Part 1 - Sinful Man, Walk on Water

Simon Peter's history is deeply instructive and portrays mainly the history of every Christian, from the first step in acquaintance with Christ to the state-so rarely attained or maintained-in which the Holy Ghost can without hindrance show forth His power. During this interval the full energy of grace is unfolded, bringing the soul into the knowledge of Christ and of Christian privileges. We see also the breaking down of soul necessary to enable the believer, after having lost confidence in self, to realize his privileges and follow the Lord in the path marked out by Him.

Peter's history in the Word of God divides itself naturally into two parts, one of which we find in the gospels, and the other in The Acts of the Apostles. The first part corresponds with the truths mentioned above; the second-on which, God willing, we shall look later-is filled (though not without failure on the part of the instrument) with the activity of the Holy Ghost in the ministry of Peter, and with that divine power which sustains him as a witness for Christ amid obstacles and conflict.

"I am a sinful man." Luke 5:1-11

The way in which Peter comes in contact with the Lord in Luke's Gospel is worthy of note. (I purposely omit noting what is of interest in Peter's first interview with the Lord in the other gospels. In John's Gospel-chapter 1:42, 43 for instance- Peter knows Him through the instrumentality of his brother Andrew, who had already found in Him the Christ.) Simon's wife's mother (Luke 4:38, 39) was taken with a great fever which rendered her helpless. Jesus heals her and fits her to serve Him. It is often thus that the soul meets Christ for the first time. It comes in contact with Him by means of the blessings bestowed by Him on others. When the moment comes for Him to reveal Himself to our own hearts, we find that He is not altogether a stranger. The Lord uses this preparatory knowledge to shorten the work by which our consciences are awakened to a sense of sin, and our hearts to a sense of grace. In this Gospel, Simon Peter knew Jesus from having seen Him at work in his house.

The son of Jonas was a fisherman by trade; he possessed what was requisite for catching fish-a boat and nets. He had used them to obtain what he wanted, and (in chapter 5) had worked all night for this purpose, but without any result. Thus the natural man employs his faculties and the means placed at his disposal, to obtain something which will fill and satisfy his heart; but it is in vain; the net remains empty. His labor yields nothing which can answer to the deep need of his soul. The night passes, and the day is about to dawn when even as a fisherman he will no longer be able to labor in pursuit of happiness. Simon and his Companions, having taken nothing, quit their boats and wash their nets. They set about washing them, for they had taken up nothing but the mud from the bottom of the sea; and when this is done they will recommence fishing. Is it not so with a man of the world? His labors to attain a desired end are renewed every day without success.

But when man's powerlessness has been made evident, Jesus appears, seemingly otherwise occupied than with Peter. He teaches the multitudes, but in the midst of His ministry His heart is

with Simon, and He does not lose sight of him. Entering into one of the ships which was Simon's, He prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. He separates Peter with Himself from the crowd, and thus he hears all the Lord says. Jesus had been no stranger to him previous to this; now he listens to His word, and his position of isolation with Him only makes him more attentive. Still, from verse 5 we may infer that the conviction of the authority of the Word was all that he retained.

After this we find the Lord more specially occupied with Peter. "Launch out into the deep," He said, "and let down your nets for a draft." Peter had done that all night, but up to this time it was by the will of man; now it was at the word of the Lord. Peter believes this word, and submits to it. The first result of God's Word is to produce faith, and faith accepts its authority and obeys. The Lord has spoken; that is enough for faith. But Jesus addresses Peter in a yet more powerful way and shows him in whose presence he is, thus reaching his conscience. He, the Creator who disposes of everything, collects the fishes in broad daylight, when there had been none at night, and fills Peter's net with them. He fills the human vessels with blessings such as they are unable to contain without breaking, and which surpass the needs of the disciples. His companions arrive with a second ship, which begins to sink likewise-so abundant are the riches given by the Lord of glory.

Peter sees (v. 8) all this blessing, but it places him for the first time, as he is, in the presence of Him who is its source and administrator. Thus it is not only the word of Jesus which strikes him, but Jesus Himself, and the glory of His Person. A revolution takes place in his soul. The blessing, instead of producing joy, causes conviction of sin, and fear, because it brings him into the presence of the Lord of glory. On the other hand, the sense of his condition, while giving him the terrible certainty that Jehovah ought to repulse him, yet casts him at the feet of Jesus as his only resource. Similarly in Psalm 130:1-4 we see the soul calling for succor from the One whom it has offended. If He marks iniquities, it is all over with it; it is lost if the question of sins is not settled. But the God who has been sinned against pardons. God is known in His love.

It is blessed for the sinner to know his real condition, the judgment which is his due, and the holiness of the Lord. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man." Peter judges himself to be a sinner and unfit for the presence of God. He trembles before His holiness and righteousness. As yet he only knows half instinctively what grace is. He is ignorant of how God can be just in justifying him that believes in Jesus; but he is at His feet and he does not flee away, because if there is any hope, it is there. As long as he was occupied in washing his nets, he knew neither God nor himself; but now he knows both, and it is a remarkable thing that he does not judge what he has done but what he is. Many souls acknowledge that they have to repent of their guilty acts, and judge them; but they have not been brought to see the source of these acts. Underneath the sins there is "a sinful man." The sense of God's presence opens our eyes, shows us what we are, and makes us see that our only refuge is with the One who could condemn us.

Fear had laid hold of Peter, but the Lord never allows fear to exist in His presence. He speaks and banishes the fear because He is the Lord of grace. He allows everything else to remain-weakening in no wise the effects of the work in the soul-but He removes the fear. "Depart from me." No, the Lord will never depart. He says, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Or, If I had not met thee to save thee, I could not save others by using thee. He does more than make Simon Peter happy; He bestows a fresh blessing on him, promising him service, so that, instead of

remaining only a sinner, Peter becomes a servant, able to leave all and follow Jesus.

Jesus had just satisfied the poor in Israel with bread, according to the prophecy in Psalm 132:15, fulfilling His character of Messiah in the midst of a people who did not receive Him. After having done them good, He sent away the multitudes, separating Himself in figure from Israel whom He was about to put aside for a time. Evening being come, the Lord had gone up alone into a mountain apart to pray. Then the night had come for the twelve whom Jesus had constrained to get into a ship. His connection with the people was over, but He had a remnant for Himself who were sailing to the other shore. The disciples were troubled, alone during those hours of darkness on the tempestuous sea, when in the fourth watch of the night, toward 3 o'clock in the morning, the Lord set out to go to them. He came to them on the angry sea amid difficulties which were nothing to His blessed feet, but which were their pathway for learning to know Him. He will in a future day employ "Jacob's trouble" to bring His earthly people close to Himself. It is a touching scene, and one from which we Christians can draw a moral lesson, though what concerns us more personally is the scene which takes place between Jesus and Peter.

Peter's first act had been to cast himself at Jesus' knees, acknowledging his sinful condition; the second, to set out to meet Him. One cannot insist too strongly on this point. To go forth to meet the Savior follows conversion, and precedes service. Peter, having as yet only the promise of being made a fisher of men, was already impelled to go to meet Him. He turned to look at the One who descended from the mountain-top, and this was but the beginning of the glorious revelations he was to receive as to the Person of Christ. Dear reader, have you gone out to meet Him? If you have not done so since your conversion, you are not yet beyond the knowledge of salvation; and you cannot pretend to the deeper acquaintance with Christ, which was Peter's later on, if first of all the Savior from heaven has not become your object and filled you with the desire to go to Him.

Peter's knowledge at first is very superficial. "Lord, if it be Thou," he says. But it is enough for the start. Everything depends for him on the identity of the person, and if it be He, His word is sufficient to make Peter quit the ship: "Bid me come unto Thee on the water." It was a serious thing to leave the place of apparent security to walk where there was no way; but, as I said, the word of Christ was sufficient for him. He knew its power. At His word he had let go the net; at His word he sets forth. It enables him to walk on the water even as it had brought him to know the Savior. "Bid me come unto Thee." In asking this favor, Peter had no thought of making an experiment, or of showing off his cleverness in overcoming obstacles; what he wanted was to go to Him. Christ attracted him, and for the moment he thought not of wind or waves. If the natural heart ignores the path which leads to Christ, faith finds a way amidst difficulties of all kinds, in the night as in the storm, and makes use of them to get nearer to the Lord. Faith quits the boat, the only apparent shelter, not esteeming it to be the true place of safety end, according to a remarkable saying of one of the ancient philosophers, "embarks on a divine word" to reach Jesus whose presence is worth more to him than getting to the other shore.

We often begin well; the first faith and the first love, the simplicity of a heart filled by an object, sustain us; and then, alas, we allow the eye to be diverted from its Object. Satan had sought to trouble the disciples by making them afraid of Jesus (v. 26), but they soon learned from His lips to be of good cheer.

Then the enemy alarms Peter with difficulties. What folly to listen to him, for do not difficulties lead us to Christ? Poor unbelieving creatures that we are! In our trials, as in our needs, the only thing we forget is the very thing we ought not to lose sight of—divine power. In the preceding scene (v. 17) the disciples had not forgotten to count loaves and fishes, nor to reckon the resources of the villages, but they had not counted on the Lord's presence. Peter also, after having set forth, began to think of the violence of the wind, and to look back on his own strength, forgetting that he had before him a power of attraction which would infallibly bring him to Jesus. And he begins to sink.

Who has not, like Peter, been on the point of sinking? Have not the Church and individuals shared the same fate? But a cry bursts from the lips of the disciple, "Lord, save me"; not "Depart from me," for the believer knows the Savior, and that His character is to save. Peter calls for help just as he is on the point of attaining his object, and Jesus has only to stretch forth His hand to draw him to Himself. One moment more of faith, and the disciple would not have sunk. Shall we still doubt, dear readers? Let us trust Him who is able to save us to the end, for the storm will not cease until the Lord and His own are finally

united in glory.

The History of Simon Peter: Part 2 - Acquaintance With Christ

Matt. 16:13-23

Peter had learned to know the Lord as the One who could meet his needs as a Savior for his sins and for his weakness. Now he had to learn something deeper and more marvelous -what the Lord was in Himself.

It is always so; the believer advances step by step in the knowledge of Christ. Still it was not by his faithfulness that Peter acquired this new blessing, but by the faithfulness of God who had separated him from men to give him such a revelation. It was the Father, not flesh and blood, who had revealed these things to him (v. 17). Introduced by the Father to the center of blessing, Peter was set in the presence of the living God. He recognized Christ in the Son of man -the Object of all the promises, and the One to whom all the counsels of God were attached -but this Christ was the Son of the living God. He was not only the Man born into the world whom God had declared His Son in saying, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"; but He was the Son of the living God. He possessed a power of life which belonged to God only, and all the fullness of which was found in Christ.

Those from whom Peter had been separated (the Jewish people) for the reception of this glorious revelation were utterly ignorant of the majesty of Jesus. For them He was only Joseph's son, or at the most, one of the prophets. They found themselves in the presence of this majesty which was unknown to them; for there must be a revelation from the Father for that. Henceforth Peter knew the Savior in His personal glory, the source and center of every blessing; moreover, Simon son of Jonas was pronounced "blessed" by Jesus Himself. Heaven was opened to him, and he possessed happiness with which nothing could compare. (I would here remark that this paper does not deal with the way in which Peter laid hold of the things revealed to him, but of the scope of these revelations. In reality Peter and his companions only understood and enjoyed these things after the gift of the Holy Spirit.)

But the Father could not reveal the personal glory of His Son to Simon without the Son revealing how this glory was connected with the individual and collective blessing of the redeemed. "And I say also unto thee." Christ also made known unto him what flowed from His character as Son of the living God.

First, "Thou art Peter"; as the Father has revealed My name to thee, I will make known to thee thine own name. Individually and collectively (together with all believers) thou hast a place in the edifice which is to be founded on the revelation.

Second, the foundation of this edifice being henceforth known (it was to be laid later in the declaration of the Son of God with power, fruit of the resurrection from among the dead), the Lord declares that He will build on Himself this Church of which Peter is a living stone. "I will build My church." It was to be the Church of Christ, to belong to Him, the object of His interest and affection. For us it is an accomplished fact; the Church exists and belongs to Him.

And you, dear readers, do you share in some measure the interest and the thoughts of Christ for His Church? There are, thank God, Christian hearts which enter into these thoughts, if feebly, and which, in spite of the Church's ruin, are capable of comprehending its beauty. This is because they see it as the Savior sees it, and estimate it at the price with which He acquired it, saying of His Church, as the Spirit of old said of Israel, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel."

This foundation, a Christ risen and exalted in heaven, gives to the Church a heavenly character. Built without doubt on earth, her foundation is in heaven, beyond the gates of hades. She is there already. The power of death, destroyed by a risen Christ who holds the keys of death and of hades, cannot and never shall prevail against her.

Third, in virtue of this declaration, a new dispensation was to be inaugurated. Israel was to be replaced by the kingdom of heaven, of which Peter was to have the keys; he was to be called to introduce Jews and Gentiles into a new sphere of blessing on earth. In virtue of the revelation of the Son of the living God, there was to be in this world a ground on which there would be a profession of belonging to Him. Peter was to be, as we shall see in the Acts, the instrument for the introduction into this blessed profession. He would have, so to speak, the external and internal administration of the kingdom, the keys, and the power to bind and loose. Personal acquaintance with Christ opens Peter's eyes to every circle of blessing; he is placed in the center of blessing, which is Christ, to contemplate the immense domain depending on it. Israel's connection with an earthly Messiah was over (v. 20). Later on this relationship will be renewed, but from this moment the Lord revealed to His disciples a total change in their hopes and position, which from being earthly were to become heavenly.

What glorious truths and precious privileges were contained in the revelation made to Peter! But here we find a new and unexpected revelation; these privileges are consequent on the death of Christ, which acquired them for us; and in order to have them, we must accept the cross. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must... suffer many things... and be killed, and be raised again the third day." (v. 21). Peter could not accept the fact that Christ must needs undergo such reproach. Could He not accomplish His glorious ends without dying? The disciple took His Master aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." There was natural affection for Christ in this speech, but it also showed that Peter had not understood or appreciated the revelation imparted to him, and which is only ours at this price. More than this, his words denoted that he would not have such a degradation either for a Christ who promised him such advantages, or for himself who, with the twelve, formed the retinue of the Messiah.

But if in some measure we perceive the human motives which actuated Peter in rebuking Jesus, he did not suspect that Satan was making use of him to endeavor to put a stumbling block in Christ's pathway. Satan's most dangerous instruments are believers who, possessing the truth and perhaps enjoying it, yet fear the reproach and enmity of the world.

To shun the cross is to deny Christianity, and it is the tendency of all our hearts naturally. Our intercourse with the world proves it only too well. It tolerates us when we venture to speak of future events, or of those truths which do not touch the very sources of Christianity; but if we speak of the cross and the blood of Christ, it despises us. We do not like that, for we want to escape reproach,

and so we deserve the Lord's severe rebuke.

What a humiliation for Peter to fall from the height of such revelations to be convicted of playing the part of the enemy toward Christ! He who had confessed the Son of the living God, who was a future living stone of the Church, who was invested with the authority of the kingdom, had to hear it said to him by the Master whom he loved, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

But what folly too it was to come and rebuke the Son of the living God, and suggest to Him what He had to do. Ah! Peter little knew himself or Him whom the Father had just revealed to him.

The whole of this account unveils what the flesh is in the believer, seen in its best light and with its best intentions. It shrinks from reproach; it is an offense to Christ; and Satan can be identified with it. After having been brought into the presence of the living God, Peter learns that his natural thoughts are not on the things of God, but on those of man. The things of men are those over which Satan has the upper hand. Man and Satan are in perfect unison.

"Come after Me"

Matt. 16:24-28

The disciples are here called to come after Christ. In order to come after Him there must be the two things which we have just considered -personal acquaintance with Christ and the knowledge of the cross. Peter had received the first, and he shunned the second. But the cross alone removes every hindrance to following Christ. It is our starting point, our first step in the Christian pathway; for the believer cannot take a single step unless he starts from the foot of the cross. This upsets all our natural thoughts, all the religious teaching of the day, which amounts to this: Take the first step toward Christ, give up your sins, consecrate yourself to God, and His grace will help you. God never framed such language, as the onset of Peter's history proves. Scripture teaches us that God has taken the first step toward man, and that this first step led the Savior to the cross, by which alone man can begin to be pleasing to Him.

Such then is our starting point for following Him. Let us see under what conditions we can walk in this path. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." Most Christians translate the words thus -"We must give up certain sins and lusts." The Word tells us we must deny ourselves. This we can only do in the power of the new man, for the old man cannot put off itself. There must be a new man in order to be able to put off the old, and say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The flesh has no more rights or place, for through the new man the Christian reckons himself dead. The consequence is that only the Christian can give up all. What are fleshly habits and lusts to the new man? For notice, it is no question of making an effort over oneself to get rid of one's chains. What delivers us is the knowledge of a judgment passed on us at the cross, and of the new place of a man in Christ. The struggle between the two natures follows. To deny oneself is to do what Christ has done, only for us it is different; for in Him there was no old man to judge. He walked in the absolute power of the new man; for He was, like the heifer, without spot, upon which never came yoke (Numb. 19). But Christ as man had a perfect will. He gave it up entirely. He said, "Not My will, but Thine, be done." Christ had rights, and He gave them up. He had all power, and He was crucified in weakness. Having entered the scene surrendering Himself, He left it with the same absolute surrender, consummated in the gift of His own life.

"And take up his cross." This is the consequence of self-surrender. He who has completely given up self would find no attraction in what the world offers him, but would consider it rather a subject of grief. Christ met temptation, not with indifference, but in suffering. "He Himself hath suffered being tempted." Thousands of Christians think they are bearing their cross when they are tried, or when the hand of God presses on them in discipline. This is not the cross. Notice the words, "Take up his cross." It is not receiving afflictions from God's hand, but taking up of one's own will -willingly, I might say - the burden of suffering that the world offers. This burden is the more real and heavy inasmuch as in following Christ we walk more in the power of the new man, who having no link down here, finds nothing in the world but enmity against the Savior, and against that which is born of God.

"And follow Me." Following depends on the two preceding conditions. To follow Him is to imitate Him. To imitate Him is to form our acts and thoughts by Him.

These three things are necessary to coming after Him. Where is the power to realize them? Peter deluded himself as to this in Luke 22:33. He thought that this power lay in his good intentions and resolutions, in his love for the Savior. How many Christians think the same. They would readily say, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." But this power is not of man (we shall take up this subject later on); it is essentially connected with two things -the gift of the Holy Ghost (the power from on high for our walk), and the loss of all confidence in the flesh. Simon Peter learned through Satan, by a fall, to mistrust himself; Paul, with God, by acquaintance with Christ in glory. When Peter is thoroughly broken, the Lord says to him definitely, "Follow Me." John 21:19. And the disciple, following Jesus, sets forth through death to reach Christ in the glory.

Brethren, let us follow Him to the end. We shall have the present blessed reward of learning here below to know Him in glory, as we shall see in chapter 17 of our Gospel. H.R.

The History of Simon Peter: Part 3 - Beholding Christ in Glory

We have reached a new event in the spiritual life of Peter. Having learned that blessing could only be acquired by the death and resurrection of Christ, he and his two companions were privileged to behold from this earth the Lord Jesus coming in glory. They were favored to see where the painful pathway closes which begins at the cross, and to enjoy the vision. It left a deep impression on Peter's spirit, and later on he learned its full meaning. In chapter 1 of his second epistle, after placing before the saints the conditions of entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, remembering the transfiguration, he explains to them of what the kingdom consists.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." 2 Pet. 1:16-18.

All the truths which referred to the kingdom were summed up in the Person of Christ. It was His power and coming; His majesty was seen; honor and glory were given to Him there by God the Father from the heart of the excellent glory. It was above all Christ who filled the scene of the transfiguration. The disciples had to learn here below who this Christ was who had been speaking to them of His humiliation and cross. Peter needed to know Him, not only as Son of the living God, dispenser of all heavenly blessings to His own, but as a man declared to be the beloved Son of the Father in glory. He had to behold Him as the center of this glory, a Man from whom not only every blessing flowed as in Matt. 16, but to whom all honor and glory were given as the unique Object of earth and heaven. A supreme voice sounded in his ears which declared that all the affections and thoughts of God were centered on this Man. Outside Him there remained nothing. When the voice had said, "Hear ye Him," they saw no man save Jesus only.

The second truth revealed to Peter on the mount was that men, subject to the same infirmities that we are, were associated with the Son of man in His glory. It was a remarkable fact that Moses and Elias each failed in his responsibility, and neither pursued the path of faith to its close. The blessing belonging to it was taken from them; at any rate it was for Elias in his prophetic office (1 Kings 19:16).

It was worthy of note that these two men were very great, for they represented the law and the prophets in the eyes of the disciples. However, Moses struck the rock twice, forgetting to sanctify the Lord in the midst of the people; and he had to die on Mount Nebo within sight of the promised land. Elijah lay down under a juniper tree, requesting to die; he then pleaded against Israel before God, and had to deliver up his office of prophet, anointing another in his room. What marvelous grace which sets them nevertheless in the same glory as Jesus-glory due to Christ, and conferred on His own in virtue of His work! Moses and Elias do not adore here; they talk with Him—a sign of perfect intimacy. The subject of their discourse was His death. The glory is the result of His death,

and His death is the subject of their intercourse in glory.

In the third place, Peter had on the holy mount a complete vision of all that constitutes the kingdom—a glorious Christ, saints raised or changed, appearing with Him in glory; earthly saints associated in this blessed scene, all well-known prophetic truths, which I merely touch in passing, and of which the apostle could say, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. 1:19.

We have seen the disciples permitted to enjoy the glory of Christ before the moment of His manifestation. They did not then understand the bearing of the scene which later on served to support their apostolic authority. Not having been called to behold it from this point of view, we only know it on their testimony; but we are also in present possession of a scene of glory, for it is said, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18.

Peter forgot the pre-eminence of Christ as long as he saw Moses and Elias. He said, "Let us make here three tabernacles." In effect, he wanted to put the law and the prophets on a level with Christ by associating them with Him; and there are many Christians who unconsciously do the same. Poor Peter! How unworthy he showed himself of the vision! His language, his sleep, and his fear, betrayed the state of his soul; and the more the perfection of Jesus shone out, the more Peter's imperfections were evidenced. We find it so at every turn, until he has fully judged himself.... The Spirit directs his gaze to the glory of the kingdom; the flesh lowers this glory to the level of failing man. The same thing comes out in the scene of the tribute money, at the supper, in Gethsemane, and in the court of the high priest, until Peter learns what the flesh is, and receives power from on high.

The excellent glory, far from repelling the disciples, attracted them to Christ, and set them at His feet as disciples, saying to them, "Hear Him." Thus Peter, with the rest, was brought to enjoy the thoughts of the Father toward the Son of His love.... The disciples, as we have said, heard one word, the brief expression of what the presence of the Son called forth from the Father's lips, for it is a word which lets us into the secret of His heart: "This is My beloved Son... hear ye Him."

Such is our present blessing. We have been allowed to share the secret of the Father. He has brought us now into intimacy with Him which cannot be exceeded even in the eternal state, although, of course, it will be more perfectly enjoyed. We shall there see all the display of Christ's glory; we shall be seen in this glory; but now we are the depositaries of the Father's thoughts revealing the Son, the Father revealed by the Son. "When the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." As we listen to this voice we shall learn more and more what the Father is to Him and to us.

The History of Simon Peter: Part 4 - Washing of Feet and Communion

A fresh aspect of the character of Christ and His work is revealed to Peter at the supper-His service in connection with communion. On the holy mount Peter had been brought into the actual scene of this communion, and had heard the Father's expression of delight in His Son; but he had to learn what was necessary in order to enjoy this communion, or maintain it, or be restored to it if it had been lost. We may, like the disciple in Matt. 17, enjoy some measure of intercourse with God without real communion with Him. Communion is being in thought and heart, one with the Father and the Son. The Lord explains it in our chapter when He says to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." v. 8. Have we part with Christ unreservedly in His estimate of things, His thoughts and affections? Have we God's judgment concerning man, the world, sin? Have we His thoughts as to the work of Christ and the value of His blood? Have we the same affections as the Son for the Father, and the Father for the Son-common enjoyment with God as to the perfection of Christ, common thoughts with the Son concerning the Father to glorify Him, to please Him, to do His will, to trust in Him, to enjoy to the full His presence?

Alas! when it comes to realizing these things we are indeed forced to own that we know but little of such communion; for in reality the moments spent in heavenly communion are, as it were, submerged in the rest of our Christian life. And yet there is nothing to hinder its being continual; for we have the eternal life which brings us into it. (1 John 1.) But if our communion is so feeble, let us not be content with our measure of it; and on the other hand let us not be discouraged. God has made provision for all our failures and short-comings in the advocacy of Christ, and by washing of the feet, which is the counterpart.

The basis of the service is the love which has been manifested once, but not exhausted, at the cross; for it remains, and will remain, the same to the end. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." John 13:1. It was not enough for the Lord to save us; His love would purify us from all defilement; and it is for this that He takes the place of a servant. Nothing can stop or hinder this service for His own. He girds Himself to wash the disciples' feet at the very moment of Judas' betrayal of Him (13:2). The possession of all things, His own dignity as coming from God and going to God, do not deter Him from this service; on the contrary, He makes use of His power in humbling Himself to serve His beloved ones. Such is His love manifested in the washing of the feet.

In connection with communion we find in this chapter the Advocate coming in to cleanse us. When Jesus says later on to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32), it is advocacy in exercise with the Father for the disciple's restoration. The Lord's act in washing the disciples' feet is a lovely demonstration of how He would now place us in contact with the Word (the water of purification) which He applies Himself by the Spirit to our consciences concerning our walk, in order to give us not a future, but a present part with Him. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." This is what we see with many blessed details in the type of the red heifer (Numb.

19)

But Peter as yet understood nothing of Christ's service so presented to him, and was unable to enter into what would thereby have been his part. Two things were lacking, expressed in these two words: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (v. 7), and "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterward." v. 36. These two things were knowledge and power.

Peter had real affection for the Lord; but this affection could not preserve him from the gravest of falls. He lacked what was indispensable - knowledge -as was proved in the hitherto most striking acts of his life. When he said (Matt. 16:22), "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee," it was his affection which spoke; and yet at this very moment Peter, as an instrument of Satan, for want of knowing the heart of Christ, dared to think that the God of love would consent to save Himself. When on the mount he said, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," it was again his affection for Jesus; but the knowledge of the glory of His Person was sadly lacking, although with his eyes he beheld the manifestation of it. He put divine grace on a level with the "law" which "came by Moses" to condemn, and prophecy which announced judgment.

In the scene of the tribute money (Matt. 17:24-27), Peter's "Yes," in answer to the question, "Doth not your Master pay?" denotes once more affection for his Master whom he thought to honor in the presence of his compatriots, but without the least knowledge of the dignity of Him who was God, Creator, Lord of the temple, Son of the Sovereign on His throne.

In the chapter before us, Peter's words, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," denote again his affection, joined to a sense of the dignity of Christ, but also ignorant of the Savior's love, which found its satisfaction in devoted service. Then when the Lord says to him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," he asks to have not only his feet washed, but also his hands and his head. Truly this was affection for Christ, for he esteemed it most precious to have part with Him; but this affection was accompanied by complete ignorance of the work which had already accomplished purification once for all. (I say "accomplished" because from chapter 13 to the end of 17 the Lord is seen as if on the other side of the cross, His hour being come to depart out of this world to the Father.)

The secret of our intercourse with our brethren is also found in this knowledge of the work and the love of Christ. As the Lord had loved them (v. 34), the disciples were to love one another; as He had washed their feet, they were to wash one another's feet (v. 14). And here let us observe in passing, that when we are in need ourselves of feet washing in order to be restored, it is not the moment for us to attempt to wash our brethren's feet. The man himself must be clean who would sprinkle the water of purification on one who had been defiled by a dead body (Numb. 19). If we lack vigilance in our walk, we lose not only the communion consequent upon it, but the great privilege of service toward others.

As we said before, the second thing which Peter lacked was power. Humanly speaking he was characterized by an energy which led him to face difficulties, but which, being energy of the flesh, did not enable him to overcome them. "I will follow Thee." "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." "I will not forsake Thee." Such is his usual language. It was always affection, but without divine

power, and an affection which did not hinder the disciple from denying his Master. What was lacking was the power of the Spirit, which is exactly contrary to that of the flesh, and which is only displayed in the measure in which the flesh is judged. For its full manifestation there must be the sense of utter powerlessness in oneself.

Peter could not have either this knowledge or power previous to the death and resurrection of Christ, or before the gift of the Holy Spirit; but what he had to pass through when he was not yet in possession of these two things was profitable to him, and is, and will be so, to others. In The Acts of the Apostles, Peter's career completely changes. Knowledge of Christ, power, self-forgetfulness, blessed service for others, are met with at every step. Old things are passed away, and we have the new career of a new man.

The History of Simon Peter: Part 5 - the Sepulcher

Luke 22:31-62

Peter had learned (John 13) what was necessary in order to have communion with the Lord. Recalling the blessings which had been unfolded to him since the beginning of his career, it would seem as if the circle were complete, and there remained nothing more to learn. But there was one thing without which all these blessings would be of no effect-the knowledge of and judgment of the flesh, and of its absolute worthlessness before God. And this we have in Luke 22:31.

Satan had desired to have this disciple that he might sift him as wheat. As in Job's case, the enemy had presented himself before God to accuse him. Availing himself of the moment favorable to his designs, when the Lord would be taken away from them, and they would be externally unprotected, he asked to put him into the sieve, in the certainty that nothing would remain which God could accept. In this way he thought to wrest him from Christ, but he was mistaken. No doubt not much of Peter would remain in the sieve; but what God had wrought in the disciple must remain. In his enmity Satan forgot that if he had all power over the flesh, he had none with regard to God and what came from Him. God granted his request because He had purposes of grace and love toward Peter, as He had of old toward Job. Peter was to be left in the enemy's hands that he might learn himself. Such dealing was needful for his blessing.

But if the enemy had displayed his activity, Christ had been at work before him, and had anticipated the moment of the sifting. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." v. 32. He had interceded for Peter even before anything had passed in his conscience. The first act, that which regards God, had taken place unknown to Peter, and in view of his fall, which had not yet occurred. The second act came after the fall, when "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (v. 61), and reached his conscience. One look from Christ was the starting-point of all the blessings which followed, recalling his heart to the love which had been in exercise to prevent his falling, and assuring him that this love, inexhaustible in its supply, was not changed by his unfaithfulness, and at length, reaching his conscience, caused him to shed bitter tears of repentance in the presence of such grace.

Then only, when truly restored, would Peter be able to strengthen his brethren (v. 32), and to deal with the hearts and consciences of others. Ministry can only be exercised in self-judgment.

The Lord (v. 33) allowed Peter's self-confidence to be plainly manifested. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." "I am ready." This was the flesh, ready to face everything. The flesh, even when warned, is always self-confident. If it had had even one atom of strength, the Lord's solemn warning should have hindered it from falling. But now the moment came when Peter, left to his own resources (vv. 35-38), accompanied the Lord to Gethsemane, and the Master was left alone. Not one of His disciples could watch one hour with Him. "Watch and pray," He said, "that ye enter not into temptation." Matt. 26:41. "Watch and pray"-that was what Jesus did. If Peter had listened (he slept in presence of temptation as he had done in presence of

glory), he would have been on his guard against the temptation, and in dependence on God, and he would not have entered into it. To enter into temptation as a man in the flesh was to succumb to it. Christ alone could enter into it and come out divinely victorious, obtaining the victory in dependence. He could have used His power to deliver Himself. At the sight of Him His enemies went backward and fell to the ground. He could have asked for legions of angels; but He submits, endures the treachery of Judas, yields all His rights (and what rights!) into the hands of men, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, without a protestation or murmur. Peter did not watch or pray. He entered into temptation, and succumbed at once. He drew the sword with impatience, he followed afar off, and entered into the high priest's court. The flesh could take him thus far, but then all its strength came to naught at the word of a servant.

The Sepulcher

John 20:1-18

The cross could no longer hold its victim. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were God's chosen instruments for giving the Savior a place with the rich in His death.

It was not everything, to know a love which had brought the Lord down to death for them; there remained a capital point to be learned. What did the sepulcher contain? What had death done with the Savior? or else, What had the Savior done with death? If the grave had held Him, His work was vain, and not one of those for whom He had given Himself was acquitted or justified.

Mary found the sepulcher open. Peter and John ascertained that it was empty. Peter went in and saw. The attributes of death were there, testifying by their presence that death had been unable to hold its prey, and that, without struggle or conflict, the victory over it had been peaceful. The napkin was wrapped together in a place by itself, as one does with a garment when preparing to go out. The "It is finished" was proved. The love which had undertaken the work had completed it; and the disciples, who as yet knew not the scripture, were convinced by the testimony of their eyes. They believed, and went away again unto their own homes.

This was a great step no doubt; but, shame be to these two disciples, it was little in comparison to what a poor woman found at the sepulcher. Mary Magdalene-knowing the love of Christ who had delivered her from the seven demons-loved the Lord with an affection which sprang from the greatness of His love, and which far exceeded her intelligence. While the intelligence of Peter and John could be engaged and satisfied with a work, Mary's affection could not be. She needed more; she wanted the Person who was her Object. Peter who had gone into the sepulcher had seen only the linen clothes and the napkin. Mary was seeking a Person, and as she wept, stooped down and looked into the sepulcher and saw the angels. The linen clothes had been enough for the disciples, but the angels were not enough for Mary. Even in their presence, and without awaiting their answer, she turned back; for she wanted her Lord. At first her utter ignorance of the things that were to come to pass hindered her from recognizing Him; but Jesus said to her, "Mary"-one single word, "Mary."

Was it surprising that there should be a link of affection between Mary and Jesus, and that the Savior in the perfection of His Person should win all the thoughts and love of such a failing, ignorant creature? It should not be surprising since she had been the object of such goodness and such a deliverance. But that there should be a link of affection from Jesus to Mary-that was the

wonderful thing. Among thousands of thousands He knew her by name as His sheep. He remembered the most wretched. She said unto Him, "Master." He replies not, "Go to My servants," but, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Mary's affection in clinging to Christ received a revelation greater (in some ways) than all those which Peter had had up to this time. Knowing only His work, the disciples had gone away again to their own home; Mary Magdalene with love which clung to His Person, had learned at the Savior's feet the most glorious results of His sacrifice. This is why Peter and John are so in the shade in this scene; a weak woman in all the modesty of her position outstrips them. Their feet were swift, no doubt, to lead them to the sepulcher. Mary was the first to know the path which leads straight to the Father and, retracing her steps with this marvelous revelation, she was the first to carry the message to the disciples.

The History of Simon Peter: Part 6 - the Soul Restored

John 21:1-14

We have in this passage some instruction with regard to the service and food of the Lord's servants, which we will examine in detail.

After Peter's many experiences, it would seem as if he were henceforth qualified for service. He went forth, followed by six other disciples, to fish in the Sea of Tiberias. What characterized this undertaking was that Peter himself took the initiative of setting to work to obtain the results of his labor. It was in vain, and the night waned before he and his companions had seen their efforts crowned with any success. Peter employed the same means as on a corresponding occasion, previous to his conversion. How often when God entrusts us with active service we set about it like men in the flesh, and our work is barren. It is important to understand that in ministry all, absolutely all, must be of God, and nothing of man.

The scene changed as soon as Jesus stood on the shore; His presence ushered in the dawn of a day of blessing. His presence was what was most needed. As long as they had toiled without Him, their efforts were fruitless. It was daybreak when this scene took place. There is a special moment determined of God for service, and the disciples, unmindful of it, had lost their time during the whole night. They found the fish at the right side of the ship, in a special place only known to Jesus, and Peter had to trust to this knowledge before his activity could be crowned with success. The disciples cast their net at His word, having nothing else to depend on, and they captured one hundred and fifty-three great fishes; their fishing in this place closed with a number determined and known only by the Lord. From this moment, they had something else to do; they brought the result of their labor to Jesus (v. 10). From this point on, they did not fish for themselves or others, but for the Lord alone.

O that our hearts, dear servants of Christ, might all learn this lesson! When, where, with whom, by whom, and for whom, are we working? Does our life consist of one long night of human activity directed by the will of man? or is it like an aurora illuminated by the Lord's presence? and do we see our nets filled because we work in dependence on Him?

As to the food, Jesus stood on the shore and said, "Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No." Doubtless they thought that this stranger, whom they had not yet recognized, was in need of food. But the question forced them to avow that until now all their labor had given nothing to Christ. Then came the words, "Cast the net." It was as if He said to them, "If ye would give Me something, you must receive it from Me." From that moment John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, could no longer be mistaken; for to him the Lord was one who gave, and to whom nothing was given.

Here another point comes out; the disciples themselves had nothing to eat. Labor does not nourish; it causes hunger. Even fruitful labor, a miraculous catch of fish, left the disciples a prey to hunger. How many souls there are in the present day of activity who remain barren, in spite of their

work, because they delude themselves as to the profit accruing to their spiritual life from their activity! It was not on the sea amidst all the surrounding effort and agitation, but on the shore where all was still that the disciples heard the Lord saying unto them, "Come and dine." The meal was not prepared with fish taken from their net, but provided by the Lord Himself, who distributed it to them. They fed on the result of Christ's work-what He alone had done for them.

May it be so with us, beloved. When we have brought the result of our service to the Lord that He may do as He thinks best with it, let us sit down, invited by Him to feed on Him in the retirement of the shore. Let us return not only for others, but above all for ourselves, to the holy Word which reveals Christ. Peter was led on a step farther in his service, and enabled to feed the lambs and sheep of the Lord.

The Soul Restored

John 21:15-19

"Lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter had said that he loved Him more, and yet had denied Him. The Lord takes him, so to speak, by the hand, and leads him back to the spot whence his fall had originated-confidence in his own strength and in his love for Christ. Three times during the Savior's last interviews with His disciples before He suffered, Peter clearly manifested his state of soul. "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Matt. 26:33. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." Luke 22:33. And "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." John 13:37. The Lord takes up these three words, beginning with the first, "Though all men shall be offended." "Lovest thou Me more than these?" All, alas! had forsaken Him, but Peter only had denied Him, and can therefore no longer rely on his love compared to that of others. Thus humbled, he appeals not to his feelings, but to the Savior's knowledge. He knew. "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He does not add "more than these"; for he compares himself with Christ, and in humility he esteems others better than himself.

Then Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs" (J.N.D. Trans.). Pastoral care for young souls springs from humility, together with love for the Lord. Where the Lord finds these things in His people, He can trust them with His service. Other gifts are perhaps not so absolutely connected with the inner state; but one cannot really take up the needs of tender souls without self-abnegation and much love, not only for them, but for Christ.

"Feed My lambs." This one word shows us what they are for Jesus, and the value of what the Lord entrusts to Peter. They are His property. The heart of Christ had not changed in regard to Simon, and He entrusted him with what He loved as soon as his first step was taken in the painful pathway leading to restoration. Peter's heart was broken, but sustained by Christ in the breaking. Jesus did not probe it three times to give him an answer only at the third; He gave it already at the first. What delicate affection and care in the discipline! If the three questions had been put without the encouragement of a promise with each, Peter's heart, distressed by his failure, would have been overwhelmed with sorrow; but the promise sustained him each time under the stroke intended to break him down. It was like the burning bush, which grace prevented from being consumed. Jesus probed Peter three times; he had denied Jesus three times. The last time nothing remained but what the Lord had produced and could approve. Sorrow was there too, no doubt, but joined to the

certainty that the love which was the fruit of His love, though buried to the eyes of all by manifestations of the flesh, the all-seeing eye of Christ was alone able to discern. "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." After the second and third questions, the care of the sheep and the feeding of the whole flock was confided to Peter. It was when, through grace, he had seen himself, and been obliged to appeal to the Lord to discover what he gave up discovering in himself-it was then that he found himself possessed of full and unreserved blessing.

Sin and Superstition

The gospel addresses itself to man not only as a guilty but as a religious creature. It finds him under the power of superstition or religiousness, as well as of sin. It is as natural for man to refuse to go into the judgment hall lest he should be defiled (John 18:28), as it is, in very enmity to God, to cry out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." And the gospel gets as stern a refusal from the religious man as from the lustful man. As the Divine Teacher tells us, the harlot goes into the kingdom before the Pharisee.

Religious vanities are playing their part in our day, and fascinating many souls. What answer, beloved, do you and I give them? Is Jesus so precious that no allurements has power? Is the virgin purity of the mind still kept? and as chaste ones are we still betrothed to Christ only? Like the newly-formed Eve, are we in our place of earliest, freshest presentation to our Lord? or have we, apart from His side, opened our ear to the serpent?

Sitting Happy

"I sat down under His shadow with great delight" (S. of Sol. 2:3).

One stormy day in the depth of winter a Christian was visiting an old man who lived in poverty in a lonely cottage. He found him sitting with the Bible open upon his knees, but in outward circumstances of great discomfort-the snow drifting through the roof, and under the door, and scarcely any fire on the hearth.

"What are you about today, John?" was the question on entering.

"Ah, sir," said the happy saint, "I am sitting under His shadow with great delight."

A Stronghold

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

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

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

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

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

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

Such a Prize

If you are really wanting to follow the Word of God, it is wonderful how God will help you. When we come down to the very fact of Israel's going out of Egypt that night, we see that they were hurried out with their bread unleavened. "And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders." Exod. 12:34. I think there was no opportunity of its being leavened. "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals." v. 39. There is a wonderful little sidelight here. "It was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt." I think what God gives us here is this, that if they had not been in such a hurry, the leaven might have got in. I will help them to start right, says God. And therefore they were hurried out with such rapidity that they did not get any time to fail in obedience. I will help them, at least, to keep My word for once in their history, says God.

Oh, it is beautiful to see the tenderness of conscience in a young soul when first converted. I quite admit it is not established in grace, but it feels it has such a treasure, such a prize, and it trembles lest it should lose it. I remember hearing a Christian say once, "When I was first converted, I declare I was afraid of my own shadow, for fear that something should come in between my soul and Christ." Tenderness of conscience and exercise of soul really come with the feeding on the unleavened bread. It is the heart delighting in Christ, and feeding on Christ. There is a response to the little light that it has. It desires to follow the mind of the Lord.

I think it is interesting to see how God thus helped Israel to keep His command as regards the unleavened bread, a command immediately repeated in the 13th chapter, which speaks of their separation and their being set apart to God: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten." v. 3. In my relation to the Church, the family, or the world, is there anything that is not like Christ? It must go. It is very simple. I do not want to escape the edge of the truth. Do you? You see Christ is everything to God, and He should be everything to us. We are in this world to exhibit Christ.

The Suffering and Glorified One

2 Cor. 3

I have been thinking how the contemplation of the sufferings of our blessed Lord is used to produce the effect in us of being epistles of Christ down here. In this chapter, evidently, it is the glory of the Lord. If I take the sufferings of the blessed Lord in themselves, I have to watch against mere human feeling. It is blessed to think of His sufferings, and it draws out the affections of saints even more than the glory; but there may be a great deal of natural sympathy and feeling about the sufferings of Christ, with nothing divine in the soul. "Weep for yourselves and for your children," Jesus said. There is nothing divine in their weeping.

In the supper, the Lord calls us back to dwell on His death in remembrance of Him, and in that way presents Himself to us as the glorified One, as the Person who would draw us completely out of the world unto Himself. We look back with Him at what His sufferings and sorrows were; then we see their divine character. When we contemplate Christ as the humbled One (see Phil. 2), we stand and adore; He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life," etc. He can give it as a motive for His Father to love Him.

When I trace His life, a lonely life, I see divine love at every step. He is the most gracious, the most affable of men, full of lowliness and grace, utterly without any sympathy from man. I see in Him divine love come down, bearing our sorrows and carrying our sicknesses; I get there the divine thing. I stand and look on that divine Person-

Christ made sin-no place where He was so alone as on the cross. In the glory we shall be with Him; we shall see Him as He is, and shall be like Him. On the cross He was alone. When I see Him as man working that work by which I am with Him in the glory, my heart is fixed upon Him there; my mind dwells on Him in glory. If my soul has taken hold of that, the effect is to make me like Him down here.

Faith is an individual matter, and each must have it for himself. Faith is always lonely; it must look to God, and God only. There are moments in every man's life when he must act with God absolutely, and with God alone; and so in every step faith is a practical possession of the soul. The Lord is the summing up in His own Person of all that the Spirit unfolds through the Word. The Spirit of the Lord gives me to behold a Man in glory, gone up on high, all accomplished in His Person, and glory the result. Then there is liberty in the presence of the holiness of God, sin settled, death done with, Satan's power done with, all the fruit of His work; we are the fruit. Liberty of heart in God, and being made the righteousness of God in Him, being associated with Jesus, the heart at liberty in perfect love-at liberty from Satan, from death, from sin-all this is the fruit of His blessed work. We are foolish to let our hearts slip down again into bondage, and miss the enjoyment in the power of the Holy Ghost of this divinely-given, divinely-wrought, divinely-sustained place, this place of a child of God, of an heir of God, etc. When the heart turns back and sees the perfect

divine work, and the divine Person who stood there, then always the divine element comes out, and we must adore.

Where is the glory now? It is in the face of Jesus Christ. There is no veil on the glory of God for me; the place where I see it, is in the face of the Man who bore my sins. I dwell on Him and look on Him and am changed into the same image, but my heart goes back to see how it was all accomplished, to see Him as the bread which came down from heaven; and we must be in heaven to know the Lamb that was slain. He will be the theme of praise there, and the more through the Spirit I know Him exalted to God's right hand, the more my heart goes back to the cross to see Him as the One who became obedient unto death. The moment I see the glory in the face of Jesus Christ, my heart goes up; though angels veil their faces, I can adore. I am still a poor feeble creature, but I can look on Him, can dwell on Him, and get blessed and established by it.

Is there any constancy of heart in us to contemplate the glory? Are we steadfastly looking up into heaven like Stephen? I feel for myself how little one does it, but in the measure of that steadfastness is the result that we shall be the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men; and it is comforting after all to think that God contemplates us with individual love. When I think of looking at His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, I think of my weakness in doing so; but when I think of His looking at me, I find there is no cloud; He is steadfastly looking upon me, though I am feeble in looking steadfastly at Him. "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous" (Job 36:7).

The Sympathy and Power of Jesus

The narratives of the gospel by John are fewer in number than those of the other gospels, and for the most part are given in much more fullness of detail. In the other evangelists the incidents recorded are like pictures in miniature; but in John there is a greater stretch of canvas, and larger pictures are presented to the eye-pictures of profound interest in which the varied glories of the Lord Jesus are strikingly displayed. Our chapter, John 11, is an illustration of this.

The scene is laid in Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha who, with Lazarus their brother, were the objects of the Lord's tender love. Simple and touching are the words in which this is expressed: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." It is worthwhile to linger for a moment over this sentence, and to note that each one is separately mentioned as being loved by Him. Jesus loves His own individually. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me," said Paul. And who does not know that there are times and seasons when the soul of the saint of God specially needs to remember the Lord's love to him individually, and finds comfort and strength in remembering it. You, Christian reader, though you are but one among the many thousands of God's redeemed, have your own special place in the affections of Christ. He loves you as if there were not another in the wide world on whom His love rested. It is written that He calls the stars by name-how much more His sheep! He knows each one-the circumstances of each, the smiles and tears, the joys and sorrows, the sunshine and clouds, the greetings and the partings; and He knows all about all, loves each one with a mightier love than has ever been associated with the tenderest of earthly ties.

But though thus loved, they were not sheltered from circumstances which awakened many a fear and burdened their spirit with a weight of sorrow. Lazarus fell sick. The action of the sisters at this juncture was beautiful indeed, and so worthy of our imitation. Sweet, too, their confidence in the Lord's love, and strong their assurance of His interest in them. They sent to say, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." No urgent request that the Lord would hasten to their relief accompanied this statement of their case; enough for them to tell Him all, to lay their burden on the bosom of infinite love.

It was not in vain that the Lord had tarried under their roof, and that Mary had sat at His feet and heard His word (Luke 10:39). Knowing His love, they turned to Him in the first blush of their sorrow; and if their expectations were not answered in the way they had thought, it was only because the love of Jesus was too great not to suffer the trial to go to its utmost length, that they might know Him better and reap a richer harvest of blessing than could otherwise have been theirs. Let us ponder this, that we may profit by their example. Child of sorrow, hast thou told thy griefs to Jesus? Thy anxieties, thy fears, hast thou spread them out before Him whose love for thee individually is so deep and true? Go, speak to Him about them; and if for a while there be no answering voice, let not thy faith in His love on that account give way.

And when the message of the sisters reached the Lord, He abode two days still in the same place. Was He then indifferent to the dark shadow that had fallen across the beloved family at Bethany?

Did He not know that Lazarus was at the door of death? Such questions need no answer. But the Lord tarried till the fitting moment came; for Son of God though He was, yet was He ever subject and obedient, never taking a step without the full knowledge that it was His Father's will. Easily we may imagine the feelings of the sisters watching by the side of their brother, their hearts alternating between hope and fear as they earnestly looked for the Lord, and yet He came not. Thus the weary hours passed, and Lazarus grew worse, till at length the flickering flame of life died out. Lazarus was dead. Had then love been doing its very best for them? Yes, indeed! Better for Martha, better for Mary, that Lazarus should die than that the Lord should have interposed before. Had He done so, they might have been spared the heartache, the blinding tears, the bitter pang caused by the dying of their brother; but God would not have been so greatly glorified. They would not have witnessed the resurrection power of the Lord; and still more, they would never have seen His tears, for Jesus wept.

And those tears and groans were but the index of what was passing in the heart of the Lord at that moment. The knowledge of all that He was about to do did not make Him less sensible to the desolation of the scene around, nor lessen His sympathy one degree. "In all their affliction He was afflicted." The tears of Jesus appeal to us more powerfully than the manifestations of His might. His might may astonish, but those tears touch the tenderest chords, and show us that every pang in our hearts has its counterpart in His.

Wonderful it was when He who is the resurrection stood at the grave's mouth and cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." Obedient to that voice of power, he that was dead came forth wearing the garments of the tomb. What a display

of the glory of Him whose Spirit by the ancient prophet said, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hos. 13:14). It was a sample of that which shall be more fully and perfectly seen at the coming of the Lord, when "they that are Christ's" shall be raised from among the dead in incorruption and in glory.

Thus Lazarus was restored to them again, and the broken ties were formed anew, but not forever. In resurrection our loved dead who have died in the Lord shall be given back to us once more, not to be known after the flesh-for the former things have passed away-but to be known in those divine relationships which shall endure to everlasting. Yes, mourner, you shall see them again, not in a body of sickness and suffering, but in a body of glory like the Lord's, and be together with Him in that home where there is fullness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.

Many are the lessons that will suggest themselves as we read and meditate on this narrative so rich in moral beauty, and fraught with heavenly comfort. Here we may learn that if the answers to our prayers are slow in coming, it is better that it should be so if such be His will; or if the power of the Lord is not exercised on our behalf as we would have wished, it is because He has a more excellent way. Let us trust Him then; let us rest in His love. Could we but stand where He stands, and view our life from beginning to end, as He views it, we should see that the dark threads and the bright have been skillfully and lovingly woven together. We should bless Him for unanswered prayers, and adore the love that has ordered everything for us so wisely and so well.

Are we in spirit near enough to the Lord to know and understand His interest in us? Can we each say, There is one heart I know better than any other; it is the heart of Jesus, who loves me

perfectly and who, in the glory of God and at the right hand of power, is leading me by a right path on to the rest beyond?

That I May Know Him

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death•' (Phil. 3:10).

The knowledge of Christ is more excellent than any other, than all other knowledge. Our knowledge of Christ should be powerful and influential, regulating our thoughts, desires, hopes, fears, confidence and our conduct toward God and man, especially toward the saints. If we do really and sincerely' desire to know Christ, we shall search His Word, meditate on His truth, be often at His throne and speak of Him to His people.

Then and Now

It is now twenty-seven years since I began my college life, a life which stretched out through eight years of good, hard work-four at the classics, and four at medicine. During the college period, and after it, and again in these latter years as a teacher, I have always been profoundly interested, as a student of human nature and of medicine, in trying to find out what ailed the world about me. Why is it, as I have grown older, that I have come to find out that there is so much misery and unhappiness in the world? Why is it that each successive generation of young men begins to run the life race that lies before them, full of vigor, of fine enthusiasm, and with a determination to accomplish great things, and then one by one, drops back into the same indifference and routine as was followed by those who preceded them?- the fire and enthusiasm gone, content in the end to make a comfortable living and to take good care of themselves.

I well recall my own class, as fine a lot of fellows as you could wish to see, and each one certain beyond a doubt that with our advent into the affairs of the world, the golden era was about to dawn. We each believed that we were destined to do some great deed, and each looked with secret admiration upon his fellows, picturing in our minds the great future which lay before each one.

A quarter of a century has elapsed, and what is the outcome? Untimely death has claimed not a few of the dear boys-and those of us who survive have entered upon life's duties, just as our fathers did before us; good, faithful work has been done, but we have failed to bring about those startling changes which we had fondly hoped would make our class renowned forever, and a sad little stone in the old college wall and a blighted ivy plant below it seem emblematic of our shattered hopes. What is the reason for the failure? Or was it a failure, after all? Was it then impossible to realize those great aspirations which thrilled us as we entered life's arena? These are the questions which I will briefly discuss in this short letter to the college men of a younger generation. In my reply I shall have to adopt the personal individual standpoint.

I would say of my own life that I have both lost something and I have found something. I have lost that which I at first esteemed great, for I discovered as I went on that it was, after all, but a glittering semblance of a jewel, fading and temporal. But, wondrous to relate, I have found in its place something infinitely more precious-an eternal possession which increases in value day by day, lending a reality and a value to life in all its relations far beyond all possible anticipations of my early years.

Let me look at my life a little more closely: what have I actually lost? I think the loss can be pretty well covered by one word which used to figure largely in our college debates and chapel speeches, a word which covered the one great qualification in a man which marked him out for success; that word is "ambition." I remember well setting success in life before me as the one great object and anxiously analyzing its essential elements, which seemed to resolve themselves into ability, ambition, opportunity, health, with various qualities added, such as judgment, memory, tact, etc. I found, by God's grace, as I went on, that this, after all, was but a selfish scheme of living

which, even if I might attain my end, was possible only for a fortunate few. I saw, too, some who were just about to take their fill of the cup of ambition suddenly snatched away by an untimely death, while others, with all the other qualifications, were restrained from grasping the prize by the hand of disease; others, again-worst mockery of all-who gained all the world could offer in the way of fame or of wealth, and remained, after all, most miserable and dissatisfied with life.

My first aim was, therefore, manifestly a false one. What was I then to do? Conclude that life was naught-only a mockery? I thank God that when I found the emptiness of my aims in the world, I also found that He was not so sparing of His best gifts as I had begun to imagine. When I discovered that life and self were failures, I then found in Him more than heart could desire. Having no longer any good thing of my own, and now content to be as one of the servants in His house, I found instead that He had a glorious robe of righteousness of His own providing, and He was willing to set the very beggars who trusted Him among the princes at the gate. It is the glorious grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which in His great mercy He offers not to a forward intellectual few, but to all men everywhere. It came as a blessed solace to one who found on all sides the vanity of setting the affections on the things of this world.

I would like to dwell on this noble theme, for I would that young men everywhere could see that there is just one thing in the world that is worth making the object of our ambition, and that is to know, to love, and to serve God-to know Him in the only way we can really know Him, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Christ is not a theory of life or a philosophy, but Life. In Him we have a new principle, a new birth, a new creation. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" 2 Cor. 5:17. And this knowledge, which brings the peace the world knows nothing of, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who calls and leads and strengthens God's people in their earthly pilgrimage.

The great effective instrument of the Holy Spirit, by which these truths are authoritatively taught, is the inspired Word of God, the Bible. Satan is gaining great victories in these days by holding men back from a loving, searching study of the Bible. Without this study, Christians remain weak and spiritually in a condition similar to the bodily condition of a man given insufficient food at long intervals; they are often found, like the poor Galatians, confessing a faith in Christ, but struggling to eke out an existence by the works of the law. If a man desires above all things to feed his spiritual man, he will not neglect to eat the daily bread of the Word, any more than he neglects his ordinary meals. Who ever hears a man say he is too busy to eat at all? And yet many are too busy to read the Bible!

My own daily life is as full as that of any man I know, but I found long ago that if I allowed the pressure of professional and worldly engagements to fill in every moment between rising and going to bed, the spirit would surely starve; so I made a rule, which I have since stuck to in spite of many temptations, not to read or study anything but my Bible after the evening meal, and never to read any other book but the Bible on Sunday. I do not exclude real Bible helps which always drive one back to the Bible, but I never spend this time on simply devotional books. Since making this resolution, God in His goodness has shown me that His Word, the Bible, is an inexhaustible storehouse from which He dispenses rich stores of precious truths to His servants as they are ready to receive them.

I see wonderful truths relating to Christ in types and prophecies which I never dreamed of before, and "the blessed hope" of His coming again has a new meaning. The messages of the epistles which I once thought full of hyperbole, now glow with meaning. And so I might go on; and so God in His great grace and goodness will doubtless lead us all on through the ages of eternity, beholding new glories and new graces in His Son.

What more can I say to arrest the attention of young people?

Once my interest was in things which pass away; now I am an actual partaker of the divine nature of Him who made all these things. What are they compared to Him? He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:11, 12. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

"And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." Heb. 1:10-12.

They Believed God

It was nearly four thousand years ago that Abraham lived. He had no child, and he was old. God, however, told him that he should have a son, and that his descendants should be as numerous as the stars. This was a hard saying, but "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Rom. 4:3.

In this day of grace, God says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:5.

More than 2800 years ago there was an exceeding great city called Nineveh. The wickedness of its inhabitants reached up to God, and He sent the prophet Jonah there to preach the message that He should bid him. So Jonah stood in the street of the city and he cried, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

That was not a pleasant preaching of grace and mercy, but a solemn one of judgment. We do not know that the Ninevites had ever before heard about the living God, though they had plenty of false gods; yet we read, "The people of Nineveh believed God" Jonah 3:5. They heeded his warning and they were delivered from the coming judgment.

Some 1900 years ago Paul stood on the deck of a small vessel sailing in the Mediterranean. He was a prisoner. A tempest was raging, and the ship was driving before the wind. There was no hope of being saved. Suddenly Paul stood forth among the crew and passengers, and told them that God had sent an angel to him, and that there should be no loss of life, but only of the ship. Incredible news! Almost too good to be true. But what did Paul add? "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" Acts 27:25; this was faith.

Blessing through Jesus is still being offered to the sinner. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." 1 John 4:14. What answer will you give to the love that makes known such blessing to you? Here is the inspired answer which is recorded for us: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." 1 John 4:16.

The Things That Are Jesus Christ's

When the believer is in the simple enjoyment of union with Christ, which he is as he walks in communion, he necessarily is interested in the things that are Jesus Christ's. It is a mere consequence of realized relationship. However, it is painfully evident that many now, as in the Apostle's day, "seek their own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." It is important, therefore, to bring our own things into conformity with what is of Christ. There is a great deal in Christianity which is my own, and which interferes with being free to give myself to the things of Christ. I have first to learn the certainty of my salvation, next my portion on earth, as a son enjoying "home comforts" in a foreign land, the heavenly joys conveyed to my soul by the Spirit of God come down from heaven.

Now so long as I am occupied on the wilderness side of Jordan, I must be occupied with my own things. I have not merely escaped from Egypt, but I have the trials and difficulties of the wilderness to encounter. I need the throne of grace where I obtain mercy, and find grace for every needful time. I am safe from judgment first, then singing after crossing the Red Sea. Then finding Marah in the wilderness, and learning how the cross which has secured my peace with God, is now the power to turn the bitter water into sweet. Then there is the manna, and the rock that follows us—Christ's daily support; but at the same time there is the effort of Satan in Amalek, to check my progress. There is then on leaving the wilderness, the learning that there is nothing good in man (Num. 21). There is not full and satisfied deliverance until I have learned that I am over Jordan—until death that we brought in on ourselves, has been acknowledged and left behind; and we do not leave Jordan behind until we, by conscious union with Christ, rise from our own death with Him into the cloudless light in which He is, in heavenly places. Here I consider Christ's things begin; but my own continue during my course as well.

Now when we are seeking our own things, they are the things prominently before us, and we can detect it in everything we say and do. It is very evident that we cannot devote ourselves to Christ's things until we are in simple rest of heart touching our own. There is a preparation for the battle-field, as I might say. We eat of the passover and we eat of the corn of the land before the conflict, before we take an open stand for the Lord.

John 13 and 14 precede in moral order chapter 15. The heart of the believer is prepared by the Lord within, before he can come forth without, as it were, to stand for Him here as His friend. You must be in the Spirit, in heavenly places, before you can engage the enemy in all his force and opposition. You have to put on the whole armor of God before you can resist the wiles of the devil; and you must know your vocation before you can walk according to it. A soul must be in the peace of God before he can be free to engage in "whatsoever is lovely." The battle for Christ must be carried on in His name and by the Spirit only. It is not a warfare visible to the human eye. The success may be visible, but the conflict is not a visible one; therefore, we must be over Jordan, in the liberty of the Spirit, before we can engage the enemy in seeking the things of Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Lord in John 15:12 sets His disciples on the earth as characteristically of Himself. They are to love one another as He had loved them. They were His friends; as He had loved, they were to love. His interests were to be theirs in the same degree as they were to Himself. The wise woman in Pro. 31 sets forth the true nature of the service -she has the full confidence of her lord. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her... • She will do him good and not evil" (as Eve had done). As there are two kinds of service in the Lord's ministry to the Church-nourishing and cherishing (Eph. 5:29)-so the true servant, devoted to His things pre-eminently, feeds and clothes the household. The Apostle gives a very large circle of works in Phil. 4:8, 9. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"; but he sums up saying, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." He was absolutely devoted to Christ's interests here.

There can never be the same kind of joy in the greatest blessing conferred on myself, and that my case required, as when in the smallest measure of His confidence I can enter into His things. There is a great distance between what His grace has done for us, and what I share as belonging to Him, as the Queen of Sheba in her interview with Solomon, though only a spectator, sets forth. It is in His things my heart learns not only the depths of His love, but how His heart acts for its object; so that then I find that His love passes knowledge, and it is then I know that all the resources of God are my support. What a moment of surpassing blessing it is when my heart is in its deepest joy, and I am conscious of all His power aiding me in that which interests my heart, because it is His things.

The Comforter is sent from the Father by Christ-the exalted Man-the Head of the body-to testify of Him; as He says, "He shall testify of Me." While then we seek His things, we are in the fellowship and strength of the Spirit of truth, so that the world, on the one hand, is marked off in a very distinct way. As John 16 says, "When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." While on the other hand, He-the Object of the heart-is glorified. Communications, present and future-His things -are shown to you as Solomon's were to the Queen of Sheba, so that the deepest joy to the heart, and the fullest sense of God's support, are only known as His things are sought by me.

We have looked at the true preparation, and the immense gain of seeking Christ's interests; we may now note the loss, suffering and judgment entailed on those who either refuse the line of God's interest at any time, or depart from it when once in it.

We must admit that since the call of Abraham the blessed God has had a distinct line of interest which He committed to a man. I do not speak here now of His own testimony to His counsels, etc., but of that which was committed to man; and as those called of Him walked in true observance of it, they were singularly blessed by Him; but as they diverged from it, they were correspondingly the victims of the things which drew them aside. When Abraham diverged, he always suffered; and when he faithfully and persistently adhered to it, he was greatly blessed.

When Isaac diverged (Gen. 26), he had to deny the very relationship which his heart delighted in, just as a Christian now, when he drops from the line of testimony, denies his relationship to Christ,

though the affection that he delights in is in his heart. Isaac suffers there and has to withdraw; and as soon as he does, he receives marked favor from the Lord. "And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed," etc. v. 24. And he had also a very signal instance of acknowledgment from man in the person of king Abimelech. Jacob abandons the line first because of his evil course- deception at home-and surely he suffered much on account of it. He on his return to it was beguiled from it at Shalem, and as he dropped down to the level of man, he suffered at the hands of man. In like manner from Joshua to Samuel. As Israel failed to be possessors of the land, they were carried captives, or oppressed where they would have ruled had they been faithful to the line of God's interest at the time.

Surely we see in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the history of the Church on the earth, and very markedly in our own day, and as it will be till the coming of the Lord, that those who are led by the Spirit of God devotedly in the line of His interests, are helped, not only by increased light and support from Him, but also by increased joy and usefulness, because they are seeking His things. And surely there could not be found on earth any path with greater or more perfect blessings.

The Lord lead all our hearts more into it, for His name's sake.

Thirteen Years

It has been estimated that the average person talks for about thirteen years of his lifetime. That is a long time to talk, but even more important than the number of words we say is the content of our communication with others. Words can change a life for good or ill. They can destroy hope, erase happiness, assassinate character and betray the spirit. As well, they can be vehicles of blessing conveying comfort, encouragement, joy and assurance. So the words we speak should be carefully chosen.

With words we may attract people to Christ or drive them away. Our words are loaded with our spirit and they convey our spirit. Hence the words of some people bring blessing, while those of others chill the heart.

Angry words are the fuel that makes the flame of youth blaze more fiercely. Hasty bitter words can never be unsaid. Trivial, idle gossip causes much unnecessary pain and heartache.

How can we make sure our words will heal instead of hurt? Matt. 12:34 says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If the heart is right, our words will be right.

It is the teaching of the Word of God that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." In the light of the fact that so much of our time is employed in idle talk and silly chatter, we need to give more serious reflection to our use of speech.

Three Chief Christian Relationships

Every Christian is a child in the family of God. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. 8:16. And God looks for us to be imitators of Him, as dear children, and to walk in love (Eph. 5:1, 2).

Every Christian is a member of the body of Christ. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." 1 Cor. 12:13. And this, too, in resurrection, where no change can ever take place: "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Eph. 5:30. And being thus livingly united to the Head in heaven, we are members one of another. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Rom. 12:4, 5. While nothing can exceed the reality and blessedness of this vital union, it also involves the most weighty responsibility. We cease to be simply individual in our actions; the whole body is affected by our spirit and ways. This consideration ought to make every Christian most careful to act consistently with his relation to the Head and members of the body of Christ: "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." 1 Cor. 12:26.

3) Every Christian is a servant in the kingdom of God. It may be through much tribulation that we enter into God's kingdom; not so into the family of God, or into the body of Christ. Christian service is connected with a purified conscience: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Heb. 9:14. In Thessalonians we find service connected with conversion, and the hope of the Lord's return: "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. In the parable of the pounds, the blessed Lord places this truth most fully and distinctly before us, with its own rewards. We read too, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Heb. 6:10. The fruit of our service will be fully known in the bright millennial day, when the time spoken of shall come: "That Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great." Rev. 11:18.

Let every Christian then seek grace to act consistently as a child in the family of God, a member in the body of Christ, and a servant in the kingdom of God.

Three Men: Saul, Jonathan, Mephibosheth

David, the son of Jesse, was chosen of God to be the savior, shepherd, and king of His ancient people Israel; and in these respects he foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior of men, and the coming King. Being God's chosen man, it followed that all in Israel who were subject to God would think well of him and yield him obedience; indeed, he became the test in his day as to how far every man understood the thoughts and ways of God. There were three men-Saul, Jonathan, and Mephibosheth-who were brought into direct contact with him, and the way they treated David is illustrative of the way men are treating our Lord Jesus Christ in our day; and this is my subject.

David was not the man whom Israel would have chosen, for he was but a shepherd lad without any pretension to greatness. They chose Saul because of his outward appearance, and even Samuel, the prophet of God, would have repeated their mistake when sent to the house of Jesse, by pouring the anointing oil upon the head of Eliab, because of the beauty of his countenance and the height of his stature. But "the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." 1 Sam. 16:7.

To the natural eye there was "no beauty" in Jesus, and so "He was despised and rejected of men"; but He was infinitely lovely and lovable in the eyes of God, for He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and the heart is the mainspring of every action.

Yes, Jesus was the Man after God's own heart, His Anointed, who fulfilled all His will.

Israel discovered in the day of their distress that God's chosen man was the only one who could deliver them. When the great Goliath threatened them, and Saul and Eliab trembled before him in their helplessness, they needed to look elsewhere for salvation. It was then that David appeared and, girded with the strength of the God of Israel, he overthrew the giant and set the people free. Then they proved what was stated of the shepherd lad at his anointing, that he was "goodly to look to."

The enthralling story of David's victory is recorded in 1 Sam. 17, and shows us in figure the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over our mighty foe, the devil-a victory told in the words of Heb. 2:14, 15: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

How complete was David's victory, and how glorious; yet how surprising to both Philistine and Israelite, for Goliath was a man of war, invincible as he thought, and armed to the teeth, while David was a stripling, with no other weapons than five smooth stones and a simple sling. But by these was that huge mass of boasting flesh brought to the dust; and there, by his own sword was the giant's head cut off, so that even the most fearful and timid in Israel might join in the glad shouts that rang out triumphantly. The Lord was crucified in weakness; He went out against the powers of darkness and the devil on our behalf, and as He hung rejected upon a malefactor's

cross it seemed as though He had met with utter and irretrievable defeat. But it was-

"By weakness and defeat

He won the mead and crown;

Trod all our foes beneath His feet

By being trodden down."

And by His death, death's dominion had been overthrown, and the devil's power annulled, and this so completely that our risen Lord can say, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. 1:17, 18.

"Triumphant saints no honor claim,

The conquest was His own."

Saul

After the overthrow of the giant, David got a measure of recognition in Israel, for we are told in 1 Sam. 18 that "he was accepted in the sight of all the people" (v. 5); the women sang his praises (v. 7); all Israel loved him (v. 16); and "his name was much set by" (v. 30). But Saul stood out in base and brutal contrast to the rest of Israel; there sprang up in his heart a bitter and undying hatred toward the people's deliverer; he eyed David with a jealous eye, and sought to destroy him (vv. 9, 10). Saul represents the unconverted man, the man in the flesh. We read a great deal about the flesh in the New Testament. It is that evil principle within the heart of man that shuts out God and Christ, and will always make SELF the supreme object of the life in opposition to Christ. The flesh will have religion, and meetings, and sometimes tolerate Christians, but it will not have Christ. When He came into the world, it betrayed Him for the price of a slave; spat upon Him and nailed Him to a cross. It has not changed in the course of the centuries, and the Christ of God is still rejected and hated by it. The unconverted man is in the flesh; he has no love for our Lord Jesus Christ, and his position is terrible, for the Scripture says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha." 1 Cor. 16:22.

Indifference to Christ and His rights may seem a small matter to some, and they may be surprised that it should call down the anathemas of Almighty God upon them; nevertheless, it does. And the justice of it will be evident to you, I believe, if you see its baseness illustrated in Saul's attitude toward David. Israel owed everything to David, for the Philistines threatened not only to seize their lands and wealth, but to make every one of them-men, women and children-their absolute slaves. Saul could not deliver them, nor Jonathan, nor Abner, and the people were at their wits' end. It was then that David appeared and, taking his life in his hand, he overthrew the great foe and delivered the people from his power. David was undoubtedly the one man in the realm whose right it was to reign, and Saul's conscience told him so, but in his selfish pride he refused to surrender to David. Saul was first in his own thoughts, and he hated David because he knew that David ought to be king. Yet David did not suffer in the fight that he waged for Israel; protected by the mighty hand of Jehovah he came through it without a scar. How different it was with our Lord Jesus Christ when He came to deliver men; His visage was so marred more than any man's, and His form more than

the sons of men. His hands and feet were pierced and nailed to the tree; every sorrow found its center in Him, and He drank to the dregs the bitterness of death. He has won an everlasting deliverance for sinful men at great cost to Himself—a deliverance from Satan's power, from the fear of death, and from eternal hell; and the preaching of the wonderful love that made Him do it should have prostrated the whole race at His feet. How base is that ingratitude that refuses to love Him! How sinful that selfishness that will not give homage to Him! How terrible the pride that will not have the blessing through Christ crucified!

Alas! "All of self, and none of Thee," is the answer that thousands are giving to the claims of Christ.

Jonathan

Saul hated David, but Jonathan loved him as his own soul; and no wonder, for he had watched the fight in the field of Elah, and as he saw David go forth against the enemy he could say, He has undertaken that conflict for me. And when the victory was completed he could say, He has destroyed the foe for me. He had also beheld him in the tent of the king with the head of Goliath in his hand; and there David won his heart, so that he stripped himself of everything that distinguished him, and made a full surrender to him. David was victor in the battlefield; he was also victor in the tent of the king. The trophy of his first victory was the head of Goliath; the trophy of the second was the heart of Jonathan. Have we known an epoch like that in our lives? Has the Lord Jesus captivated us? Do we love Him and have we made a full surrender to Him? Four lines from Charlotte Elliot's sweet hymn express this surrender perfectly:

"Just as I am, Thy love I own

Has broken every barrier down;

Now to be Thine, yea, THINE ALONE,

O Lamb of God, I come."

How beautiful was the devotion of Jonathan to David! And we learn how greatly David prized it by his touching lament at Jonathan's death: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." 2 Sam. 1:26. Yet Jonathan was slain in Saul's company by the hands of the Philistines, and he did not see the glorious kingdom of his well-loved friend. I have often wondered why this was—why the one who shone like the rising of a brilliant star in his love to David at Elah should have set in darkness at Gilboa. I believe I have found the reason in 1 Sam. 23:16-18.

We have a heart-moving scene there. David and Jonathan met in the wood, as they had met before in chapter 20:41, 42, and there they bade each other a last farewell; and Jonathan, moved by love to his friend, and the knowledge that God was with him, renounced all claim to the throne in the words, "THOU SHALT BE KING... AND I SHALL BE NEXT" (1 Sam. 23:17).

It was there that the strength of Jonathan's devotion declared itself; it was there also that he betrayed its weakness. David first, but "I... NEXT." Oh, why did he not put a full period after he had declared that the kingdom was David's, and then been silent as to himself! Why did he not leave the appointment of his place to his king? for surely the king alone had the right to say who should

be next unto him. It was the introduction of the capital "I"-his thought for himself-that was the undoing of Jonathan. This carried him back to his father's court, where his friend was hated, and where in former days he had been persecuted for his friend's sake. How different his history might have been if he had said, "David, thou shalt be king, and I will share thy rejection until thy rights are publicly owned; whither thou goest I will go. I am wholly thine; command me as thou wilt." It would have meant for the time being the cave and the mountain-side, the place of rejection, instead of popularity and the palace of the king. But it would also have meant a place of honor in the kingdom of David instead of ignominy and death at the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines.

How solemn is the lesson that this story teaches. It is possible to begin well and yet to fail in that full-hearted response to the Lord's love which alone is right and well-pleasing to God; it is possible for thought of self to come in and make us careful for our own ease and safety and, as we often falsely judge, our own present advantage.

The believer is not in the flesh but in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), but the flesh is still in the believer, and whenever it is consulted or allowed to control us, it will find room for self, and in so far as it does this, our lives are not wholly for Christ.

David in his rejection prefigured Christ in His rejection; and be it clearly understood that Christ is just as much rejected now as when men cried, "Away with Him." His rights are not acknowledged; the world does not put its crowns upon His brow; men do not want His interference in their affairs, and those who truly follow Him must heed the words of the One whom they follow: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:19, 20.

This is our life, and the treasure we have found in His love should make us welcome it.

"Love so amazing, so divine, Demands our soul, our life, our all."

And "if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."

But I must add here, that all who love the Lord will see His glory, and in the day when He reigns, they shall be with Him; and He will remember every thought of love to Himself, and every act of faithfulness to Him, and this should constrain us as well as His love to us, to live wholly for Him, and to refuse all the clamoring of self and the flesh for a place.

Three Men: Saul, Jonathan, Mephibosheth

The good start in devotion to David that Jonathan made was carried on in perfection in his son Mephibosheth. He was a very different sort of man to the Gadites with "the faces of lions," who were "swift as the roes upon the mountains," and "could handle shield and buckler," and were "fit for battle" (1 Chron. 12:8). David needed such men as they were, for he was a man of war; but he was also a man with a heart great and tender, and he valued above all things devotion to his person. And who shall say that the crippled son of Jonathan did not give him more pleasure in the long run than the fearless veterans of his old guard.

One thing is certain. David found great pleasure in showing him kindness "for Jonathan's sake." He called what he did "the kindness of God," and seemed happier in doing it than in slaughtering his foes. In this one incident he stood out prominently as the man after God's heart, for we know that God finds His delight in bestowing blessing upon needy, helpless men. That part of Mephibosheth's contact with David is beautifully told in 2 Sam. 9

The question is, How did Mephibosheth react to David's great kindness? He could not do great and brilliant things; he would have been useless and a burden on the field of battle, yet there was something he could do—he could appreciate David's kindness and he could keep a heart loyal to him. He certainly seems to have been grateful to David for all the benefits he bestowed upon him, but sometimes a man may appreciate favors and have very little true love for the benefactor. It may even be so with us; we may value the blessings that come to us through Christ and yet not have much loyalty of heart for Him. It is a sad thing to contemplate, but it may be so, and assuredly the test will come.

The test came to Mephibosheth. Absalom, the favorite and spoiled son of his father, rebelled against him, and David had to flee the city of Jerusalem. There never had been such a day of sorrow for David in all his checkered career; he reached then and there the lowest point of his fortunes, and the strange thing was that Jerusalem seemed glad to see the back of him, and to welcome the traitor son. What would Mephibosheth do? When the full story is told we learn that he would have shared the sorrow and evil of the king if he could have done so, but it was not to be. Robbed and slandered by his servant, he was forced to remain behind in the city that had cast off David. The city rejoiced; it held high revelry, but Mephibosheth did not join in the festivities; he held himself in strict separation from it all and mourned for the absent king. He "neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace." 2 Sam. 19:24.

Do we realize, O Christians, that the true King is rejected by the world, and that the devil has usurped His throne, and is both god and prince of the world? This the Scriptures teach most plainly; and since this is true, what should we do, who are left in it? If we are devoted to the Person of our Lord as Mephibosheth was to David, we shall feel that a great moral gulf lies between us and it, that we have nothing in common with it, and that practical separation becomes us.

"It's grand fete days, and fashions and ways Are all but perishing things."

Yet not because of this only, but because it is against God and Christ, and lieth in the wicked one, we must go through it as Christian and Faithful went through Vanity Fair in John Bunyan's book.

It is exceedingly interesting to see what Mephibosheth said to David when he returned in triumph to his throne and city. He rejoiced that the king had come back to his own, and he wanted nothing for himself. The king's rights and not his own were everything to him. He claimed nothing for himself, but he made his boast in David's grace and in David's word. Hear what he says, "All of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king." Dead men have no place or rights; they cannot claim anything, especially when they are dead under the sentence of a righteous law. And it was this that this grandson of Saul, David's great enemy, meant; so it seems to me. But if he could claim no place in the king's palace and favor because of what he was, he could rely on David's word and boast of his kindness. He said, "Yet didst thou set thy servant among them that

did eat at thine own table." David had said that he should eat bread continually and at his table as one of the king's sons, and he knew that the king's word would stand, and he wanted nothing more.

Moreover, Mephibosheth declined to put in a claim for any possession in the land, for when the question arose as to Ziba his servant sharing the land that formerly belonged to him, he said, "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." He struck the right note, and it is happy for us if our hearts are tuned to the same key. We had no claim upon God, for we were all dead men before Him; but He is rich in mercy, and for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, He quickened us, and saved us, and set us among them that eat at His table. In the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us, He made us His children in an unchanging, everlasting relationship. Shall we not rejoice in this? Mephibosheth could not forget David's kindness. In this last incident in his life's story, it stands out as the one thing that dominated him and expressed his relationship to his king. And can we forget? It would be a strange and unnatural thing if we did.

As we consider Mephibosheth, his moral greatness grows upon us. He was no whining flatterer, thinking only of his own advantage. His loyalty to David in rebellious Jerusalem was great; the entire absence of self-conceit and self-seeking on David's return increases our admiration for him; and his reliance on David's word and his boast in what David had done for him were evidence of true gratitude. His joy at the king's return in peace was so great that he does not even ask that his slanderous, thieving servant should be punished. He desired no property, he sought nothing for himself. The person of the king was everything to him, and that the king should have his rights was all his desire.

We are looking for the time when our Lord will come into His rights, when the long years of His rejection shall close, and the nations shall own Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. It will be the day of His glory, and a happy day for us if some of the traits of Mephibosheth are showing themselves in us now. Glorious and happy day will this be for all those who love Him.

But how do we stand in this matter? Let us put the treatment that David received from these three men together and test ourselves as to our attitude to the Lord Himself.

SAUL-Saul everything, David nothing. JONATHAN-David first, Jonathan second. MEPHIBOSHETH-David everything, Mephibosheth nothing.

In one of these three classes we stand. Lord:

"Take Thou our hearts, and let them be Forever closed to all but Thee;

Thy willing servants, let us wear The seal of love forever there."

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!

To Me to Live Is Christ

"To me to live is Christ." These words throw immense light on what was the spring of everything in the mind of the Apostle Paul. He wanted people to see not himself but Christ, that Christ might "be magnified" (made more apparent).

To him to live was Christ. The living water flowed through and out of him. After his conversion, all his life was the flowing out of the living water fresh from Christ, the Rock of Ages. And was not Christ magnified in such an one?

He took all his trials from Christ. He not only desired to believe, but to suffer for His name's sake. What Paul was given was awareness of a new light, a certain glory, and the doctrine coming out through it with double effect. Paul had learned the truth of a risen Christ by a direct interview with the Lord Himself. He had said, "Saul, Saul" (Acts 9:4). It was not only the gospel. It was a certain living Person in glory whom Paul knew and with whom he occupied himself.

And Christ must be known to every believer before "to me to live is Christ" can be taken up. If you and I know Christ as our accepted sacrifice who has perfected us forever by His work, should it again be with us a question of our sins? No, it is now a question of His glory. It is not only a doctrine, but a reality, that He Himself is the life of the believer (Heb. 10:14; Col. 3:4).

And what was that life? What were His thoughts? One can say with reverence that He was a Man of one idea; "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). He was always setting forth the Father down here; and now that He was here no longer, He thought to have Paul to be a disciple of Himself, to "live... Christ." As Christ had shown out the Father, so Paul was to show out Christ, and nothing but Christ, as one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). Christ, the Man in glory, is revealing Himself to believers, giving them to know Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and then saying, Now I look for you to let the light shine out.

Have you Christ dwelling in your heart "by faith," that you may be filled? If He dwells in your heart "by faith," have you got a fullness that passes knowledge? He up there, in a brilliance of glory, is calling on you to know His love, love that passes all understanding (Eph. 3:19).

That was the Christ of whom Paul spoke with such ecstasy. It was his one object in life or death to glorify Him. And could he miss his object? His one object being to please Christ, his life became the manifestation of vital union with Him.

Can you say that one thing, I am for Christ? Do not shirk the question. Let it go right into your soul. Paul was entirely and completely for Christ here. Ah! he was a blessed man. He had put down all selfishness. He would only live to Christ in the life He had given him. And if you could say, "To me to live is Christ," would you not be more than a conqueror in all things? Let the trials or difficulties be what they may, having Christ in them, would they be loss? No; no loss, but all gain.

It was the purpose of God to present to us in Paul a man of like passions with ourselves, to show how such a man could walk with Christ so as to say, "To me to live is Christ." He was a man of the

strongest passions and character, but he mastered all that, and brought everything into subjection to Christ; in everything he dropped into "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

We see the vital perception he had of that for which Christ had apprehended him. The Lord in glory was before him, and he could never rest until he reached Him: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14.

It is immense strength to get before the soul the reality of a certain Person, a living Man up there in glory, as the prize I am to attain. I may have to go through a dark passage here, but never mind; there is that One in glory, and I am pressing on to win Him, to reach Him. It was not merely a doctrine with Paul; it was the working of his heart's affections about a Person he was going to be like and to be with.

We are to be molded into the same image (Phil. 3:21). Yet, how little are the saints exhibitors of Christ! Do you think of Christ up there, and what His thoughts are while looking at you? Not the working of your mind going up to Him, but His working toward you, as a Shepherd on the top rock, looking down on a certain people for all of whom He laid down His life. Do you ever think of seeing Christ with those eyes of yours-of hearing His voice with those ears? Yes, of soon seeing Him at the goal, and of being made like Him (1 John 3:2)? No more for you to do then; only to enter into all the seen and felt reality of fellowship with Him which faith even now enjoys.

Ah! we need exceedingly to have our hearts now occupied with the Lord Jesus up there. Nothing can give such brightness of face and heart as being able to say, "To me to live is Christ."

True Humility

While it takes grace to take the low place, it takes more grace to do it in the right spirit. There is such a thing as taking the low place with the spirit of an injured man, and with the feeling that you are a kind of martyr.

True humility, on the other hand, will take the low place cheerfully, and not only submit to the will of God, but agree to the same. A false humility is sure to overdo its part. Such humility seems to be so very humble, that it is at once seen that it is pride in disguise.

True humility cannot only take the low place, but any place, provided the Lord is glorified.

The Two Rich Men

Luke 18 & 19

How beautifully the incidents recorded in the evangelists exhibit the workings of nature and of grace. They are short and familiar, but full of matter for the meditation of our hearts, that we may be either warned or comforted.

Uneasiness of conscience was goading the rich young ruler of chapter 18 to seek relief wherever it might be found. He loved the world and could not give it up; and yet he had religious apprehensions of a day of judgment, and owned the fact that there was a kingdom of God still to come. This is a common case; a calculating worldly heart with serious religious sentiments, all together working uneasiness in the soul. He was a sample of the thorny ground hearer. He would fain have both worlds, and yet was not sure that he had the future world. And how could he? How could such a double-minded man be stable? How could a body, the eye of which was thus evil, be full of light? His uneasiness was goading him hither and thither, and in his waverings he seeks Jesus.

Can anything be more natural? He was not a reckless man of pleasure, but a religious, calculating man of the world who could deliberately weigh his own interests for time and eternity, and make them supreme in all his reckonings.

He was with all this, of course, nothing but an old bottle (see Matt. 9:17). The new wine is therefore spilled. The doctrine of Christ is lost upon him. He goes away as he had come—a lover of the world—for the love of money keeps him apart from Jesus, and thus outside the kingdom of God.

The Lord draws the simplest moral from this incident. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples, however, are amazed at this, and say, "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus answers, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." These last words are much to be noted.

It is the way of the Spirit in Luke to group together matters for moral instruction, making that much more His object than mere accuracy of historic time and place. After a short interval from the time of the case of the rich ruler, according to this his usual method, Luke gives us the case of the rich publican, Zaccheus of Jericho.

They were both rich, and up to this moment they may have had much in common. From this time on, however, as far as we can learn of them, they are separated forever. Solemn thought!

Zaccheus is not under the goading of a natural conscience. Rather, his path was under the drawings of the Father, for he seeks Jesus (John 6). It was the secret effectual drawing and teaching of the Father, and not the goad of an uneasy conscience, that was determining his present path. This was so, as we have said, because it lay toward Jesus; as He says Himself, "Every man... that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." And that path, leading to Jesus, led away from the world. For Zaccheus was now traveling a road which nature

and the spirit of the world would never have taken. He forgets himself on this journey. He was no longer the rich publican of Jericho. The young ruler, on the contrary, had never forgotten his riches. But, wealthy and important as Zaccheus was, all that is now forgotten, and through the crowd he passes, and up the tree he makes his way, careless of every cost if he may but see the Lord.

This is very beautiful. Here is an incident exhibiting the work of grace; the former had shown the working of nature. The ends of these workings are as different as the paths themselves. He lays his wealth at the feet of the Lord; the ruler had gone away full-handed as he came.

For Zaccheus was a new bottle. He keeps the new wine. Both are preserved. The wine is not spilled; the bottle is not burst. The drawing of the Father had led the soul, and the Person of the Son filled it.

Here was a living witness of what the Lord had said-"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Here was a rich man entering the kingdom because he was not under the mere impulse of the conscience-that never could have done it-but under the leading of God Himself, the teachings and drawings of the Father.

The Unequal Yoke: Not Plow With Ox and Ass Together

An important principle lies here, and inattention to this principle has caused hundreds of children of God to go astray. The passage speaks of the unequal yoke. Lev. 11:3 teaches that an ox is a clean animal, and is thus a type of a true believer who is made clean through the precious Word (John 15:3). The ass, being an unclean beast, typifies an unbeliever, as we read in Job 11:12; "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." In Exod. 13:13 too we find that the first-born son and the firstling of an ass must alike be redeemed with a lamb, for the unregenerate sinner is as stiff-necked, stubborn, and rebellious as this brute beast.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord bath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Cor. 6:14, 15.

The children of Israel had been separated from the nations by God. Four times Balaam sought to curse them, and when this failed he succeeded in getting them to mingle with the Moabites, and to join themselves to Baal-peor (see Numb. 22-25), and thus ruined the people who had been called out to be a living witness to the one true God.

Many Christians who once were bright, earnest, separated, and devoted children of God, have been ensnared by Satan, formed an unequal yoke, had their testimony spoiled, and they are today total wrecks, and a danger to all who come near. Satan ever seeks to get the thin edge of the wedge in first, and few see where it all leads until too late.

You, my true fellow believer, have been marked off from the world and bound with indissoluble ties to every child of God, but as surely separated from the unbeliever as Israel was from the nations. Christ has won your heart, and you can only know this world as the place where He was crucified. Grace has taught you that you no more belong to it than does your rejected Lord; and to be a friend of the world is to be false to Christ. An unbeliever has taken his side with the world and against Christ, for "he that is not with Me is against Me."

Of all the evils, the saddest consequences come from the unequal yoke. Young Christians sometimes become engaged to unconverted persons, and often deceive themselves by the fact that they are very moral and upright, and thus seek to persuade themselves that they are not doing wrong; but the truth is that in such a union the child of God is being joined to an enemy of God, a hater of Christ, and a child of wrath. There is no middle path, and the bitterest sorrow is the only harvest that can be reaped; for "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Useful lives have been ruined, and much dishonor has been brought upon the name of the Lord Jesus through this unequal yoke. It is neither faithfulness to Christ, love to them, nor justice to yourself to continue for another moment in such an unholy path. Oh, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." Pro. 4:26, 27.

The enemy may also allure the Christian by many clubs where the unequal yoke is formed under the plea that 1) Recreation is needed; 2) What harm is there in this? 3) May I not by joining be an influence for good?

Then again there are religious associations where believers and unbelievers are joined together; some even go so far as to include every parishioner, regardless of new birth; and oftentimes immoral persons are allowed to take the sacrament professedly in remembrance of the Lord's death. This is the very worst kind of evil. How can they remember a person they know not? God says to His own people who thus mix with what is so false, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Cor. 6:17. Again, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." Rev. 18:4.

Dear fellow believer, ponder these things well. They are not small and insignificant matters. Not only your blessing, but the glory of Christ is at stake. The unequal yoke includes every association, religious, commercial, or otherwise, where believers and unbelievers are joined together by common ties. Ye are not your own "for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

Useful

Why is the Christian left in the world at all? If a man makes a clock, it is for a purpose. It has hands to show the time, and they are like the living members of Christ here-made for use, for service to Christ. Why were you not converted until just before you were going to die? It would have saved God a great deal of trouble and much dishonor if He had converted people just before they died. God meant to get honor to Himself down here. As the clock is made to show the time, so God's people were intended to show forth His praises. A clock is never kept in order if it is not kept going; and you will never find a body in health if not in action; and in spiritual things you will never find a Christian in a healthy state who does not keep his body a living sacrifice for God (Rom. 12:1). A Christian ought to be full of joy and of the Holy Spirit.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death

Psalm 23

An inquiry is often raised whether "the valley of the shadow of death" is death, or the world lying in the shadow of it. We believe it is the latter. If it meant death itself, "the valley of death" would have been, it seems to us, the expression used; but "the shadow" of death presents to the mind the idea of danger of death, or of what leads into it, and brings the anticipation or dread of it upon the soul. A comparison of other places where the term is used in the Psalms, makes this plain. In Psalm 44:19, the remnant of Israel speak of themselves, under the government of God, as "sore broken... in the place of dragons, and covered... with the shadow of death." So again in Psalm 107:10 and 14, when "redeemed from the hand of the enemy," they recall the mercy that reached those that sat "in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron," and that when they had cried to Jehovah, "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death."

From these scriptures it would appear that "the valley of the shadow of death" was to the psalmist the path where the gloom and danger of death was especially in question, but where the protection and support of Jehovah were his comfort, so that he feared no evil, as one who would be preserved from death itself. What follows in the Psalm supports this thought.

For the believer now, the world, or rather his pathway through it, is "the valley of the shadow of death." How truly was this so to the blessed Lord! Death's dark shadow ever rested on the path He trod-especially in Gethsemane where He says, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." But He tasted death itself in all its bitterness, unprotected and unsupported, on the cross. The shadow of death, where His rod and staff comfort us, is all we can know; for the rest we await His coming, and not death itself.

The Veil Rent, Not Removed: Part 1

"And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubim shall it be made. And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy." Exod. 26:31-33.

These are very precise directions about the veil; its substance, its colors, its place, and its use; all are described, leaving nothing to be supplied by the wit of Aholiab, the device of Bezaleel, or the wisdom of Moses. As God instructed Moses, so Solomon, four hundred years afterward, made a veil for the house which he built, of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and put cherubim on it (2 Chron. 3:14). To divide between the holy place and the most holy was one great use of it; but also, while it hung there in its pristine completeness, it marked the limit of approach for the sons of Aaron to the presence chamber of the Lord God of Hosts. Before that veil in the sanctuary, and up to it, each priest, when in the holy place, could go; but behind it none could venture except the High Priest, once every year on the day of atonement. Within it was that chamber where, after the death of Moses, unbroken silence reigned except when the High Priest passed behind the veil. While Moses lived, at times, as we learn from Numb. 7:89, the silence which characterized that chamber was broken by the oral communications to the mediator from the Lord Jehovah. When he died, these communications stopped and, though the footsteps of the officiating priests accomplishing the service appointed them must have resounded daily through the holy place, no sound from within that curtain broke on the ears of those without. Yet God's throne upon earth was within that veil. He dwelt between the cherubim, and the bright cloud of glory—the Shechaniah—showed His presence in the sanctuary (Lev. 16:2). How solemn that stillness must have been to the priests as they went about in the holy place! They knew the character of the chamber within, but heard no sound of life coming from it, though the living Lord Himself made His earthly throne the mercy seat. He dwelt in thick darkness and in an atmosphere which was not to be disturbed by the presence of those who caused din and discord without; for when Aaron entered, he entered only as the type of the High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God guarded the entrance into the holiest very jealously. Redeemed by blood, as the children of Israel were, they never could get beyond the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle. Although the sons of Aaron had been consecrated, in accordance with a ritual of divine appointment, they could never get behind the veil within the holiest of all; and Aaron, though privileged by virtue of his office to enter that innermost sanctuary, could only pass within by blood, having first taken in a censer filled with sweet incense, but lighted with live coals from the altar that was before the Lord (Lev. 16:12), that the cloud of incense might cover the mercy seat, from which shone out in brightness the light of the holiest.

This condition of things continued for hundreds of years; that is, a nation in relationship with God, owned by Him as His people, yet never allowed access into His immediate presence; for the veil, stretched across the full width of the sanctuary, proclaimed that there was a spot on earth on which even the feet of God's priests could not tread. The message conveyed from God to man in this way was very clear. The way into the holiest had not been made manifest. The typical meaning of the veil itself, and the typical teaching as to its colors, were subjects as yet unrevealed. That a way would one day be opened, could be learned from Aaron's periodical entrance on the great day of atonement; but how that way would be opened out, and when, remained an insoluble mystery for all those centuries.

At last the day and the hour arrived when that mystery was to receive its solution; and as by divine teaching Israel had understood that no child of Adam could remain in God's immediate presence, so by a divine act on the part of Him who directed the erection of the veil, the way and the ground of access to Him were disclosed in a moment of time.

But God's thoughts are not like our thoughts, nor His ways like our ways. That which in accordance with all human thought would have sealed man's doom forever, and taken away all hope of being before God without the fire of His judgment descending on him-that is, the death of God's Son on the cross-was the ground on which He could righteously act in the fullest grace to sinners, and permit the soul to enter with boldness into His very presence, and to be at rest before the throne. All that men could do to express their hatred of God and of all that savored of God, they had done. Jesus hanging on the cross, and there at that moment dead, showed what man must be. Man's hands were stained with the blood, not merely of a righteous man (for that was nothing new in this world's history), but of the Holy One, the first and the only, in the fullest sense, faithful and true witness for God upon earth. "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Matt. 27:50, 51. Never before had men had such an opportunity for showing themselves to be unworthy of favor from God. For they had openly rejected Him who went about doing good (Acts 10:38), and though no charges worthy of death could be proved against Him, they had not paused for one hour in their restless activity till their wish had been gratified. The plans of Satan were carried out in the shameful and agonizing death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

They could not do more. All that they could do against Him personally, they had done; but death, to which they had delivered Him, barred all further pursuit of the object of their hatred, and demonstrated that the outward actors in that scene were but creatures of very limited capacity. They could judge Him to be worthy of death; they could urge the governor, as permitted by God, to wield the sword of judgment against the Lord; but death, to which they delivered Him, shut them out from further ill-treatment of Him. Their power as men was limited, though they might, as they did, put forth all their strength.

But when they had done all that they could, having put out of the world by death the Prince of Life Himself, God began to work to manifest what He is and what He could do. He rent the veil-a fact told in a very few words-an act done in a moment of time, but an act of great and abiding importance; and, as such, repeated three times in the Word. Matthew, Mark, and Luke narrate it-the first two in its historic order in relation to the other events of that day; the last in a moral order, in accordance with the plan often to be traced in the Gospel which bears his name,

bracketing together, as it were, supernatural events of the crucifixion, the great darkness over the land, and the rending of the veil in its midst. At the ninth hour, the hour for prayer, the Lord died; and at the same time the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. God had commanded through all the changes of the tabernacle and the temple, that the veil should divide the holy place from the most holy. He had screened the ark and the mercy seat from the gaze of the priests, as morning and evening they burnt incense on the golden altar before it. God, by His own act, without the intervention of a single human creature, rent the veil—a testimony to the opening up of a new and living way into His presence. This divine act was one of immense significance. It spoke of a sacrifice offered which was perfectly acceptable to God. It told of the character and purpose of the death of God's Son on the cross, who gave Himself to die as the sin offering and to make atonement for sinners. It bore witness, likewise, that God could not allow men to enter into His presence, while He maintained at its full height, the standard of His holiness.

The Veil Rent, Not Removed: Part 2

God rent the veil. We should mark the word. God did not remove it Himself, nor did He authorize its removal by others. He did not withdraw it, nor did He roll it up from the bottom, nor lower it from the top like a curtain. He rent it in the midst. And perhaps the priest who ministered that afternoon at the golden altar of incense, or certainly those who entered the sanctuary shortly after its occurrence, must have seen the veil still hanging up on some of the pillars or hooks to which it was attached, but with a way into the holiest at the same time displayed by the rent made in its midst. "A new and living way." A new way it was, for no high priest had in such manner entered the holiest before. Year by year, as often as they observed the ritual appointed for the day of atonement, they must have passed behind the veil; but, now as it was rent, such a way into the holiest was unneeded. A living way it was and is. For none of the sons of Aaron could penetrate within the veil, save the high priest, and then in the prescribed manner, else death would have awaited them and him. Now that the veil had been rent by God, there exists no barrier on His part against the entrance of His people, who are a holy priesthood unto Him, into the place where He is on His throne. But, let it ever be remembered, they can enter only through the veil. The way opened, but opened in this manner; and the veil, as we learn in Heb. 10:20, being a type of the Lord's flesh, the typical meaning of its colors can be discerned as well as the teaching about the veil itself. Christ died; then the veil was rent, and that of which there had been no type was immediately disclosed. There were types of the Lord's death as the voluntary offering on His part, as well as the sinner's substitute. There were types, too, of Him as a man upon earth, and there were also in the ceremonial law those which had respect to His resurrection (Lev. 14:6, 7; 23:11). But there could be no type to illustrate the way into the holiest, to be opened up by His death. The rending of the veil is the only illustration of this, and that once rent was an operation which could never be repeated. The ground on which the entrance would be based was typified as often as the high priest went within the veil with the blood of others; but as the way was to be through the veil-the flesh of Christ-the same veil could only be rent once, if the truth as to the death of Christ once for all was to be taught to and maintained by His people. He died, and God's immediate response to the voluntary surrender of His Son to do His will on the cross, and to be the sinner's substitute, was the significant rending of the veil. Till He died, none born in sin could go with boldness to the mercy seat; but when He died, before ever He was taken down from the cross, men, we learn, were no longer to be kept out of the innermost sanctuary, if only they would approach through the rent veil.

And now, as to the typical teaching of its various colors, etc. There was only one veil, into the fabric of which different colors were introduced. And since that veil was the type of the flesh of Christ, the different colors of blue, purple and scarlet, with the fine twined linen, and cherubim of cunning work, typify certain things, which in combination are seen only in the virgin's Son, conceived by the Holy Ghost. He was the heavenly man (1 Cor. 15:47), so blue is the first color mentioned. Purple, the royal color, suitably finds a place in that veil which was typical of the flesh of Him who was born king of the Jews (Matt. 2:2; see also John 18:37); and though rejected as

such by the representatives of the nation (John 19:15), He will be set by Jehovah as His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Psalm 2:6; Luke 1:32, 33). Moreover, Rev. 19:12 and 16 show us that there will be "many crowns" on His head, and that HE WILL BE "King of Kings." Scarlet is the emblem of worldly glory, and Psalm 8 tells us that all things will be put under Him, as well as that He will be crowned with glory and honor. Solomon's reign typifies that time when all worldly glory and magnificence are connected with the kingdom. Then we have the fine twined linen, declarative of His spotless holiness- "that holy thing which shall be born" (Luke 1:35). Last, since cherubim are mentioned in Scripture in connection with the judicial action of the throne (Gen. 3; Psalm 18 and 99; Eze. 1 and 10; Rev. 4 and 5), how fitting that the cherubim of cunning work should be wrought on the fabric of that curtain, indicating that the One of whom it was the type, was appointed by God to wield the power of His throne, all judicial action having been committed to Him as Son of man (John 5:22, 27).

Not only do we read of the veil being erected, but also of its being rent. These are historical facts of which the Word informs us; but facts, too, with the practical bearing of which every Christian should be acquainted. Hence we read in Heb. 10 the exhortation to make use of the road so graciously made for us into God's presence. We approach on the ground that Christ's blood has been shed, but through the veil-His flesh. Thus, while God has opened up for us one way in His grace, surely He would impress on our hearts that no other road can lead us into His presence, if divine judgment is not to overtake us. And as we are indebted to His grace for opening up the way, we are indebted likewise to His goodness for acquainting us with it. Those to whom the sacred writer wrote about it were those best acquainted with the meaning of the veil when unrent; and He would have them, and have us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to make use of the way which Christ has consecrated, or dedicated, for us through the veil-that is to say, His flesh.

Believers then may now with boldness enter the holiest of all, for it is to believers that the exhortation is addressed. For, as of old, none but the priests could enter the sanctuary, so now none but those who believe in the Lord, and as such are members of the "holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5) can enter the holiest of all, and then only through the rent veil-that which, as rent, reminds us of divine judgment poured out on the Son of God's love.

This is truth suited for Christians at all times, and most needful in this day when lax views are abroad concerning God and His grace. Grace is free to all who accept it, and a man's former state and ways are no hindrance, if a believer on the Lord, to his entering the holiest now. But when he enters, and by the way he enters, he bears witness to the holiness of God while sharing in the riches of His grace. He enters by a road which speaks of judgment borne for him by God's own Son. He enters on the ground of the value of Christ's precious blood. He enters by means of His death, through the veil- His flesh. God is merciful and gracious, but never at the expense of His holiness. One road, and one only, has ever been made by which we could enter into His presence. God rent the veil, and by it He teaches us the need there was for His Son to become incarnate, but the imperative necessity, too, of His death. As incarnate, the veil unrent was a type of Christ; but, as such, showed that then no way to enter the holiest had been made manifest. It was the rending of the veil which disclosed the living way into it. Incarnation and crucifixion were both necessary before that way could be made known.

How a simple fact like this and the divine teaching about it preserve the soul from being led away by human thoughts, and men's erroneous conclusions! To be brought into God's presence, in a way in accordance with His mind, while refusing to believe in the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, is thus shown to be impossible. To profess to believe in His incarnation without bowing to the truth of His atoning death, will shut out a soul from God's presence as completely as the sons of Aaron, the priests, were excluded from all entrance into the holiest. The thought that God is too merciful to punish sinners is refuted by the fact that the Holy One of God had to die before the way into the holiest could be made manifest. Divine judgment has been executed on Him. God has shown at the cross what His holiness demands, while displaying there also what His love could give. And though believers on the Lord Jesus, and they only, have permission to enter the holiest because of the efficacy of His atoning blood, the very road upon which they must travel to reach the mercy seat and the throne, attests both the necessity and the validity of His death. Believers bear witness to the need of the incarnation and the death of Christ when they enter the holiest. Entering through the rent veil-the flesh of Christ-they own that every other avenue by which men would seek to make a way into God's presence, is barred as effectually as ever. One way, and one only, has ever been opened, and that by God Himself-that true and living way which declares in clear, solemn language that only because His Son had died to make atonement, could He rend the veil. For gracious and merciful though He is, He never can be gracious, and He never will be merciful at the expense of His holiness

The Vision of the Almighty: Balaam's Prophecies

Read Numb. 23 and 24

In these remarkable chapters we are called to stop and listen while Jehovah tells out in the ear of the enemy what He thinks about His people. Balak, the king of Moab, terrified by the sight of "all that Israel had done to the Amorites," hired Balaam to curse them; but the Lord made use of the tongue of the covetous prophet in order to tell out His thoughts about Israel. He will not allow anyone to curse His people. He may have to deal with them in secret about many things, but He will not suffer another to move his tongue against them.

This is a grand point. It is not what the enemy may think about God's people, or what they may think about themselves, or what they may think about one another; the real question is, what does God think about them? He knows exactly all that concerns them, all that they are, all that they have done, all that is in them. Everything stands clearly revealed to His all-penetrating eye. The deepest secrets of the heart, of the nature, and of the life, are all known to Him. Neither angels, men, nor Satan, know us as God knows us. Hence, it is not with "the vision" of angels, or "the vision" of men, or "the vision" of Satan, we have to do, but with "the vision of the Almighty."

This gives sweet peace to the heart. God sees us, thinks of us, speaks of us, and acts toward us according to what He Himself has made us and wrought for us according to the perfection of His own work. Thus it is we appear in "the vision of the Almighty"-thus we are seen "from the top of the rocks." When God looks at His people, He beholds them in His own workmanship; and it is to the glory of His holy name, and to the praise of His salvation, that not a blemish should be seen on those who are His-those He in sovereign grace has made His own. His character, His name, and the perfection of His work, are all involved in the condition and standing of those with whom He has linked Himself. Hence, the moment any enemy or accuser enters the scene, Jehovah places Himself in front to receive and answer the accusation; and His answer is always founded not upon what His people are in themselves, but upon what He has made them through the perfection of His own work. His glory is linked with them and, in vindicating them, He maintains His own glory.

This tranquilizing, purifying, and elevating truth shines with uncommon luster in Balaam's four parables. Humanly speaking, we never should have had such a glorious view of Israel as seen in "the vision of the Almighty," "from the top of the rocks," by one "whose eyes are open," had not Balak sought to curse them. Jehovah can very speedily open a man's eyes to the true state of the case in reference to the condition of His people. He claims the privilege of setting forth His thoughts about them. Balak and Balaam with "all the princes of Moab" may assemble to hear Israel cursed and defied-they may build "seven altars" -they may offer a bullock and a ram on every altar-Balak's gold and silver may glitter before the covetous gaze of the false prophet; but not all the powers of earth and hell combined, in their dark and terrible array, can evoke a single breath of curse or accusation against the people of God.

As well might the enemy have sought to point out a single flaw in that fair creation which the Lord God had pronounced "very good," as fasten an accusation upon the redeemed of the Lord. Oh! no; they shine in all the comeliness which He has put upon them, and all that is needed in order to see them thus is to mount to "the top of the rocks" -to have the eyes "open," so that we may see them in "the vision of the Almighty."

Having given thus a general view of the contents of these remarkable chapters, I will briefly present to my reader the special point contained in each of the four parables. He will find in the entire subject a rich mine of instruction.

1) In the first of Balaam's parables, we have the absolute separation of Israel distinctly set forth. "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (The way to "die the death of the righteous" is to possess and exhibit the life of the righteous.) Here we have Israel singled out to be a separate and peculiar people-a people who, according to the divine thought about them, were never at any time, on any ground, or for any object whatsoever, to be mingled with or reckoned among the nations. "The people shall dwell alone." Let the reader ponder this deeply, both in its application to the literal seed of Abraham, and also to the people of God now. Immense practical results flow out of this great principle-results which we do not attempt to unfold in an article like this. We merely ask the reader to follow this point as it is traced for him in the Word. "The people shall dwell alone."

2) But if Jehovah in His great grace be pleased to link Himself with a people-if He call them out to be a separate people, in the world-to "dwell alone," and shine for Him in the midst of those who are still sitting "in darkness and the shadow of death," He can only have them in such a condition as suits Himself. He must make them such as He would have them to be-such as shall be to the praise of His great and glorious name. Hence, in the second parable, the prophet is made to tell out not merely the negative but the positive condition of the people. "And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; He hath as it were the, strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he shall eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Numb. 23:18-24.

Here we find ourselves on truly elevated ground. This is in truth "the top of the rocks"-the pure air of "the hills" where the people of God are seen only in "the vision of the Almighty." In this parable, Israel's blessedness and security are made to depend not on themselves but upon the truth and faithfulness of Jehovah. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent." This puts Israel upon safe ground. God must be true to Himself. Is there any power

that can possibly prevent Him from fulfilling His word and oath? Surely not. "He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." In the previous parable it was, God "hath not cursed." Here it is, "He hath blessed." There is very manifest advance.

As Balak conducts the money-loving prophet from place to place, Jehovah takes occasion to bring out fresh features of beauty in His people. Thus it is not merely that they are a separated people dwelling alone, but they are a justified people, having the Lord God with them, and the shout of a king among them. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." The enemy may say, There is iniquity there all the while. Yes, but who can make Jehovah behold it when He Himself has been pleased to blot it all out as a thick cloud for His name's sake? If He has cast it behind His back, who can bring it before His face? "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

God sees His people so thoroughly delivered from all that could be against them, that He can take up His abode in their midst, and cause His voice to be heard among them. Well, therefore, may we exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" It is not, What hath Israel wrought! Balak and Balaam would have found plenty to do in the way of cursing had Israel's work been in question. The Lord be praised, it is on what He hath wrought that His people stand; and therefore their foundation is as imperishable as the very throne of God.

3) In the third parable, we have another step further. The Lord's people are not merely separated and justified; they are actually "goodly" in His sight. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lignaloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Numb. 24:5-9. Thus it was better and better for Israel-worse and worse for Balak. He had not merely to stand by and hear Israel "blessed," but to hear himself "cursed" for seeking to curse them.

But let my reader specially mark the rich grace which shines in this parable. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" If one had gone down to examine those tents and tabernacles in "the vision" of man, they would have appeared "black... as the tents of Kedar." But, as looked at in "the vision of the Almighty," they were "goodly," and whoever did not see them as such, needed to have his eyes "open." If I am looking at the people of God "from the top of the rocks," I shall see them as God sees them, and that is, as clothed with all the comeliness of Christ-complete in Him-accepted in the Beloved. This is what will enable me to get on with them, to walk with them, to have fellowship with them, to rise above their points and angles, blots and blemishes, failures and infirmities. If I do not contemplate them from this lofty ground, I shall be sure to fix my eye on some little point or other which will completely mar my communion and alienate my affections.

In Israel's case, we see in the very next chapter what terrible evil they fell into. Did this alter Jehovah's judgment? Surely not. He is not "the son of man, that He should repent." He judged and

chastened them for their evil, because He is holy and can never sanction in His people, anything that is contrary to His nature; but He could never reverse His judgment. He knew all about them. He knew what they were and what they would do; but yet He said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob." Was He making light of their evil? To say He was, would be blasphemy. He could chasten them for their sins; but when an enemy comes forth to curse or accuse, He stands in front of His people and says, in substance, "I see no iniquity"- "How goodly are thy tents." Precious, adorable grace! May we drink more deeply of it, and manifest its purifying, elevating influence.

4) In the fourth and last parable we reach, as it were, the very loftiest crag of "the rocks," from whence we can discern the beams of the glory gilding the horizon. "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty,... I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." Num. 24:15-17. This gives great completeness to the entire scene. The top stone is here laid upon the magnificent superstructure. The thoughtful reader of these sublime parables must be very sensible that, as he reads, he is mounting upward. In the opening parable, the people are seen in separation, dwelling "alone"; and then as Balak continues to shift the corrupt and covetous prophet from place to place, with the fond hope that the glittering pile may yet evoke the desired curse, we find ourselves conducted from height to height until at length we stand upon the very summit and survey the plains of glory in all their length and breadth, stretching away far beyond the limits of mortal vision. We hear the lion's roar. We see him pouncing in crushing power upon all his enemies. The Star of Jacob rises to set no more. The true David seizes the scepter and ascends the throne. Israel is preeminent in the earth, and all his enemies are covered with shame and everlasting contempt.

Christian reader, may we abide in spirit on "the top of the rocks"; may we ever have our "eyes... open"; may we hear "the words of God," and know "the knowledge of the Most High"; and may we only see "the vision of the Almighty."

Watching

The characteristic of a person who has his ear open to the Lord, is watching. "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 [that is a figure], and will come forth and serve them." Luke 12:37. I find Him serving them in divine love, still in the same character. He comes and takes us to heaven-to His Father's house-that where He is, there we may be also. "While you were in that wicked world," He says, as it were, "I was obliged to keep you on the watch, in a state of tension, with diligent earnestness to keep the heart waiting; but I take you to a place where you are to sit down, and it will be My delight to minister to you."...

What characterized those servants was watching, and they got the blessing. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." Ah, beloved friends, are you watching, waiting for Christ practically? I cannot be watching and going on in my own way. Are our lights burning, or have we slipped down to the ease and comforts of this world like other people? This is not having our loins girded, and it is not only as a doctrine we are to have it.

Who Will Go Through Great Tribulation?

This is a question of perennial interest, and concerning which there is considerable confusion even in fundamental circles.

Scripture emphasizes the peculiar character of the Great Tribulation by declaring that nothing like it has ever preceded, or will follow it.

Matt. 24 and a good deal of the book of Revelation is taken up with the events of this period. The duration of the entire tribulation period will be seven years, but the portion known as the Great Tribulation is stated as "forty and two months," "a thousand, two hundred and threescore days," "a time, and times, and half a time." This is three and one-half years. The description of the sufferings of that day is terrible!

The Old Testament prophets foretold the tribulation. Jeremiah called it, "The time of Jacob's trouble." He wrote, "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble." Jer. 30:7. Daniel declared, "There shall be a time of trouble [tribulation], such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time" (Dan. 12:1). Our Lord Himself described the tribulation in these words: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Matt. 24:21.

The Locale

Who will go through this most awful time? Predominantly the Jew. The tribulation refers specifically to that nation, for it is definitely called "the time of Jacob's trouble." It is the time of Israel's trouble because of her rejection of her Messiah. Note also that in Dan. 12:1 the whole prophecy is the description of what is to happen to Daniel's people-the tribulation is the tribulation of Daniel's people. This ties in with Matt. 24 where the Lord Himself speaks of this same time and same event, using the terms of Daniel, and referring to him by name. (Compare Matt. 24:15; Dan. 12:11.) Also the language of the chapter confirms this as to the locality. Those who are in Judea are to flee to the mountains. Those who are on the housetop are not to come down to seek anything. They are to pray that their flight may not be on the sabbath. All is local and Jewish, having no application at all to heavenly hopes which rest on going to meet Christ in the air.

But, as to the question, Will the Church go through the tribulation? the answer is, No, for the following reasons:

A New Race

The Church is made up of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, both Jew and Gentile, who in Christ Jesus are neither accounted Jew nor Gentile, but "a new creation." When Christ came, He was nailed to the cross. It was then that He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, and bare the sins of all who believe, in His own body on the tree (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). After His burial He arose from among the dead and was preached to both Jew and Gentile; and when individuals of these racial groups (classes) believed, they became living members of the body of which Christ is the

Head.

The Church may-in fact, has and does-suffer persecution or tribulation in a general sense, for, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12. Samuel Rutherford, in the midst of such persecution and suffering, could write, "The Lord is with me, I care not what man can do. I burden no man, and I want nothing. No being is better provided for than I am, my chains are gilded over with gold. No pen, no words can express to you the loveliness of my only, only Lord Jesus." Today many of our Lord's people-in many countries-are suffering persecution for Christ's sake.

There is a great difference, however, between suffering persecution for your faith at the hands of man, and suffering the wrath of God in the Great Tribulation. The Church will not partake of this.

Lovely Types

Enoch of the Old Testament typifies the Church raptured to heaven. He was without human distinctions or political importance-"unknown and yet well known." Being dedicated to his heavenly Master, his home was there, and there he was translated without seeing death, before judgment came on the earth (the flood in Noah's day). He left behind him a simple record that, walking by faith, he pleased God and testified of the advent of Christ-a picture of the Church testifying and being taken before judgment comes.

Another beautiful picture of the Church is seen in Asenath, the Gentile bride of Joseph. She was exalted to one of the highest places in Egypt with Joseph, after his brethren had sold him. In like manner the Church will be united to Christ in highest glory before the Great Tribulation (typified by the seven years of famine that brought Joseph's brethren to repentance). Thus we see pictured the bride, the Church, with the Bridegroom in the Father's house, when the Jews below on earth are brought low in the tribulation.

The Antichrist

Please read also 2 Thess. 2:1, 2: "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...." Here we find the Church caught up to be with the Lord before the events that the Thessalonians feared were to take place. We notice, too, in verses 6 and 7 of the same chapter that the antichrist, because of whom the tribulation breaks out and rages, will not be revealed while the Church is on the earth. He-the wicked one-will not come forth until the Restraint, the Holy Spirit, is taken out of the way. This will take place when the Church is translated and the Holy Spirit's restraining operations through it cease.

One Hope

There are many things which must precede the tribulation, such as the formation of the ten kingdoms of Daniel and Revelation, and the manifestation of the antichrist; but nowhere is the believer told to look for anything to take place before the Lord comes for His Church. On the other hand, the New Testament abounds with exhortations to wait for Christ from heaven. See such scriptures as Rom. 8:23, 1 Cor. 1:7, Phil. 3:20, 1 Thess. 1:10, and Titus 2:13.

"Lord, now we wait for Thee to come

And take us to Thy Father's home;

Oh, what ecstatic joy 'twill be

To spend eternity with Thee!"

Words

Keep a watch on your words, my darling,
For words are wonderful things;
They are sweet like the bees' fresh honey-
Like the bees they have terrible stings
They can bless like the warm, glad sunshine
And brighten a lonely life;
They can cut in the strife of anger,
Like an open, two-edged knife.

Words of Man's Wisdom Versus True Wisdom

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. 1:18-31.

The most familiar and most forgotten of truths is that the flesh in the believer is just the same as the flesh in the unbeliever. This was doubtless known, but certainly neglected, by the saints at Corinth; and as the evil which the flesh brings into the Church always resembles that prevailing in the world around, so here we see the vices of Greek society penetrating into the Corinthian assembly. License of walk and license of speculation distinguished the world in which these new converts dwelt; and license of walk and license of speculation were the evils which soon appeared in the Church. The license of walk showed itself in their tolerance of moral conduct such as was not even "named among the Gentiles," in their drunkenness and indulgence at the Lord's table, and in the disorderly and lawless character of their meetings. The license of speculation showed itself in their skeptical reasonings about the resurrection, in their lax thoughts about identifying themselves with idol worship, and in their readiness to divide into schools of doctrine according to their preference for certain teachers.

They did not, in fact, see man's ruin. They believed, of course, as Christians do now, in the fall as a fact; but they failed, as these also do, to grasp the consequences it involved. They would have allowed that it alienated man from God, but that it so utterly blinded his moral nature as to render him incapable of seeing the truth of God, they do not appear to have understood; and this is just the error of our own times. Many indeed think that the flesh needs mending, and is susceptible to improvement. Others again admit its moral ruin, and confess the need of a new nature; but how few see the total incapacity of man's natural wisdom to judge rightly in the matters of God. The Corinthians, overlooking this truth, brought their own fleshly wisdom to divine things, and the inevitable result was confusion and division. They were splitting into schools of doctrine, the germs

of sects like our own; and the Apostle declares that they were carnal, and walked as man.

It is for the purpose of meeting this tendency to exalt, or rather to allow, man's wisdom, that the passage before us was written. Paul says that Christ sent him "to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." 1 Cor. 1:17. How solemn this is in the light of what we see around us! In how much of the preaching of the day is human wisdom not only allowed, but demanded? Preachers are sought after for their eloquence, their logic, their talents, rather than for the fidelity with which they present the truth of God. Simple subjection to Scripture is not up to the level of modern thought-shows that the preacher has not kept abreast with the progress of the age. But God's Word is clear. The cross of Christ and the wisdom of man cannot go together. If the cross of Christ is to be exalted, man's wisdom must be brought low. If man's wisdom is to be magnified, the cross of Christ must "be made of none effect."

The reason is simple: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." 1 Cor. 1:18. So widely do man's thoughts diverge from God's, that even in the most marvelous display of God's saving power man can discern nothing but foolishness. No wonder, for if God is to be known at all, He must be known morally. But men's consciences shrink from looking at God in His moral character. Therefore, long ago, "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Rom. 1:28. The very wisest became fools in the things of God. The most learned and philosophical people in the world owned their ignorance by raising an altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Others groped in idle speculations, but all were equally blind as to what God was. This was according to God's wisdom, for as He is holy and righteous, these are the first things that a sinner must learn, and these are just the truths to which natural wisdom can never attain. God must be known, not as fallen man can understand Him, but as He has revealed Himself; and this, only the soul taught by the Spirit can comprehend. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14.

But when "in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. 1:21. For God's salvation must address itself to man's moral ruin, and this is just the fact which the pride of human wisdom will not and cannot recognize. Hence the cross becomes the scoff of the wise, the stumblingblock of the worldly-minded. Power and wisdom are the two things which man admires, but they must be power and wisdom suited to his own thoughts. The Jews look for a Messiah arrayed in worldly majesty and glory; the Greeks sought after a god suited to their philosophical speculations. How could either then recognize or receive a Savior who came clothed with humility and weakness? "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." vv. 22-24.

It was impossible for the Jew, with no sense of the moral ruin of his people, to recognize the power of God in the One whom he had seen scorned and spat upon, scourged and crucified. It was impossible for the Greek, with no consciousness of sin or need, and seeking only for the gratification of his intellect, to discern the wisdom of God in the death of an obscure Galilean peasant who had been crucified between two thieves. To perceive the wisdom and power of God

in such a scene, there must be the complete giving up of all human pretension, the submission of heart to God's righteousness, the consciousness of need as a lost, ruined sinner. It is only "unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks," that the power and wisdom of God can shine out from such a background.

But to them, what marvels of power and wisdom are here disclosed! Where was victory so complete and so far-reaching as that which was achieved when this Man of sorrows bowed His head and gave up the ghost? The iron bondage of sin and Satan was forever broken; the veil which hid God from man, and kept man from God, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; the righteous judgment of God was borne by the spotless sacrifice, and the fountain of His grace and love set free to flow out in streams of richest blessing to a ruined world. Such was the display of God's power in Christ crucified; nor was His wisdom less conspicuous or less adorable.

If it is in the Church that God now displays His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, where would that Church have been but for the hours of darkness passed by the Holy One upon the cross? There it was that the cunning and craft of Satan were turned to his own confusion, his seeming victory changed to defeat, Christ's seeming overthrow converted into triumph. Thence, from that lowest depth it was that He ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men; for truly "the foolishness of God is stronger than men." v. 25.

And this is always God's way, that "no flesh should glory in His presence." So it was when Jesus was in this world, for the things of God were hid from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes. So it was of old. It was by the foolishness of blowing rams' horns round a powerful fortress that "the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." It was by the weakness of Shamgar's ox goad, Gideon's three hundred, Samson's jawbone, that Israel was delivered, and the armies of the aliens were turned to flight. Everywhere we see God choosing "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

Such is, and ever has been, God's way. That man's natural wisdom is corrupted and useless in the things of God, and that God has poured contempt upon it, and chosen to work by that which the world's wisdom despises as foolish, is plain wherever we look. He would strip fallen man of all glory in order that He may make Christ Jesus to be to the believer "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

How worse than useless then to bring in the thing which God has discredited to the preaching of the gospel, the teaching of God's truth, or the ordering of His Church. When brought into the preaching of the gospel, its effect is to make the cross of Christ of none effect; when brought into the teaching of God's truth, its effect is to cause strifes and sects, to substitute "philosophy and vain deceit" for that mystery in which "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; when brought into the ordering of the Church, its effect is to displace the directions of Scripture for rules and forms of man's devising. Whether it takes the form of wisdom or ceremonial, of rationalism or ritualism, it is, as we see in the Epistle to the Colossians, an intruder and disturber, from which those who are dead with Christ should know their deliverance.

There is but one rule for the new man, and that is the Word of God; but one interpreter of Scripture, and that is the Holy Spirit. Here we have God's wisdom, and not man's; and if we would

rightly understand it, we must do so by discarding man's wisdom altogether and taking the place of learners in God's school. If any man "seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." In the age when man's wisdom and science are exalting themselves against God, and even true believers are beguiled by their pretensions, it is well to see clearly the utter worthlessness of these things in helping us to understand the mind of God, and to grasp with firmer hand the truth of the all-sufficiency and sovereign authority of that Word which "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

Ye Are Christ's

1 Cor. 3:21-23; John 17:9, 10

"Ye are Christ's." I invite you to dismiss from your minds all popular notions as to what our relations with Christ are, (for the more popular a notion is, the more likely it is to be false), and come back to the clear, unmistakable words of Scripture. They are not, "Christ is yours," but, "Ye are Christ's." I am not aware of any passage in the New Testament that says, "Christ is yours."

We are His possession; His claims are absolute; He is our Lord. This is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Many things are yours. Before we reach this arresting statement, we are told, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours," and popular Christianity would crown this glorious wealth by saying, "And best of all, Christ is yours." But the Scripture does not say that at all. What it says is, "YE ARE CHRIST'S, and Christ is God's." Just as Christ was and is and ever will be altogether at God's disposal, the willing Servant of His good pleasure, so are we to be at Christ's disposal, to be pleasurable to Him both now and forever.

We did not choose Him, but He chose us; we did not buy Him, but He bought us, and great was the price He paid; and since He chose us and bought us, we must belong to Him-spirit, soul and body. Yes, body as well as spirit and soul.

I know that it is preached and taught that Christ is the pearl of great price, and that we as merchantmen seeking goodly pearls must surrender all we have and purchase Him so that we may call Him ours (Matt. 13). But it is a false interpretation of a great passage, and sadly mars its beauty and power. Christ is the merchantman, and His Church is the pearl of great price. For it He sold all and gave Himself, that it might be His by unchallengeable and everlasting right. His Church is His, and you are part of it if you have believed (Eph. 5).

That we are not our own but Christ's is emphasized later in this epistle when the Apostle, full of surprise that his Corinthian converts were forgetting it, and of indignation at the conduct that resulted from their forgetfulness, urges "Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? for ye have been bought with a price; glorify now then God in your body."

1 Cor. 6:19, 20; J.N.D. Trans. Our bodies belong to God because they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Not only are we purchased, but taken possession of-purchased by the blood of Christ and possessed by the Holy Spirit. What else could be true but this, "Ye are Christ's."

When first the apostles proclaimed that God had made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ, so real was it to those who yielded themselves to Him that they put all they possessed at His feet; they kept nothing back. Land, houses, everything belonged to Him for He was Lord, and they were His; and without delay or regret they surrendered all to His disposal. Was that because they were a generous and large-hearted people? It was because they wholly recognized the claims of Christ.

Nor was the truth less effectual among the Gentiles who believed, for the churches of Macedonia, though in great poverty, first gave their own selves to the Lord and then placed what else they had at His command. So it is recorded for us in

2 Cor. 8 The Christians at Corinth had not fully owned the sovereign Lordship of their Savior. It is probable that they boasted that Christ was theirs. It seems certain that they did, for they were taking the benefits and gifts that they had received because they were Christ's, and using them for self-exaltation.

They were laying hold of these benefits and saying they are ours; they were puffed up thereby, and this was producing all kinds of strife and envy where peace and love should have held sway. They were reigning as kings, these people who could boast that Christ was theirs, while Paul and his fellow apostles, men who fully owned that they were Christ's, were the offscouring of all things, for so we learn from chapter 4 of this epistle. Paul could not reign where Christ was crucified; he must be as his Lord.

The sort of Christianity that the Corinthians showed is the sort that is popular today, and just as they needed to have the truth pressed upon them that they were Christ's, so do we. There can be no advance in grace and truth, no walking and growth in the Spirit apart from this. "Ye are Christ's" must gain its proper ascendancy in our lives if we are to manifest what the Scripture shows us that Christians really are.

Before proceeding to speak of the blessedness of this fact, let me say that it is not my intention to take from anyone any definite blessing or joy that they may have derived from thinking of Jesus as theirs. There is a certain measure of truth in that side of things; the trouble is that it is forced wholly out of its place to the detriment of souls.

It is true that the Lord Jesus has placed Himself at our disposal. He is our Savior, our Advocate, our Priest; all the grace and love that fill His heart flow out without limit for us; in that sense He may be said to be ours. But was there ever a Christian who really got the joy and benefit of these things apart from owning the claims of the Lord over him? It is only as we own that we are Christ's that we can rejoice in what He is to us.

It is good to speak of Him as our Savior. Yes, but what did He save us for? That we might belong to Him. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"-that we might be His peculiar treasure. We rejoice to speak of Him as our Lord; but that means not that He belongs to us, but that we belong to Him; it is not our claiming Him, but our owning His claims over us.

We delight in the fact that "The Lord is my shepherd." True, but does the shepherd belong to the sheep, or the sheep to the shepherd? His own account of this blessed relationship is very definite. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.... I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine.... My sheep hear My voice.... neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.... My Father... gave them Me." There is no part of Scripture that emphasizes the great fact that we are Christ's more than John 10; and oh, the preciousness of it! We are His because of the great love that fills His heart for us, love that has flowed forth and proved itself by His death for us. He gave Himself that He might possess us for Himself forever without a rival. We are His because His Father gave us to Him, and we are more precious to Him

because of this than thrones and kingdoms; we are the Father's love gift to His well beloved Son. We are His because He can keep us. He can hold us against the threatenings of every hostile power. In His right hand dwells omnipotence. The sheep belong to the Shepherd. "Ye are Christ's."

We may begin, and often do, like the bride in Song of Solomon who sang in her new-found joy, "My beloved is mine, and I am his "; but if we advance in the knowledge of the Lord we shall speedily change our song as she did, and rejoice with a greater joy to sing, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." The first is a sort of half truth in which self has a place of prominence; the last is the whole truth, in which Christ is all. There the heart loses sight of all but the greatness and tenderness of Him who has been spoken of in poetical language as "this tremendous Lover." Then it is realized that the only response to love such as His is to yield ourselves to Him, and it becomes the joy of life to own that we are His.

This means much to Him; if we would know how much, we must measure the travail of His soul when He gave Himself to save us; and as we endeavor to do that which is impossible, we must remember that His joy in possessing us will compensate Him fully forever for all that He has suffered to make us His. He will say in the day of His glory, The prize is worth the price.

But consider the Lord's intercession on behalf of His own in John 17. He is speaking to His Father in that full and blessed communion that ever existed between the Father in heaven and the beloved Son upon earth. He makes requests for His own. Hear Him say, "the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me.... I pray for them... which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine;... keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me."

When He spoke to His disciples, He could not tell them all that was in His heart. He was straitened and restricted. But when He spoke to His Father, what was in His heart could flow out without any reserve, and could anything affect us more deeply? Could we possibly listen to that wonderful prayer and not gladly and fully own that we are Christ's indeed? We are His because the Father gave us to Him; His because He bought us with a great price; His because we are possessed on His behalf by the Holy Ghost. Yes, the truth, the whole truth is this, "Ye are Christ's." Let it fix itself in our hearts and minds, and produce in our lives its own true and blessed fruit.

Ziklag

1 Sam. 27-30

In no place, save in the matter of Bathsheba, is David so morally low as in 1 Sam. 27 His loss of confidence in the Lord, and his consequent lies and artifices in the court of the king of Gath, are sad indeed. His heart, it is true, was not turned away from Israel. He was Israel's champion still, in all the desires and purposes of his soul, and had his eye toward Israel's prosperity and honor. But for present circumstances he had lost all faith in God.

It is not at once or speedily that the Lord begins the discipline of His saints. At least it is not commonly so. Our sin may find us out years and years after it is committed. The Lord may call our ways to remembrance long after we have left those ways and turned to better. The sin of Saul against the Gibeonites, which was visited in the distant, closing days of David, may illustrate this for us (2 Sam. 21). "God moves in a mysterious way." He takes methods which are all His own in the exercise of His hand with His people. But He "is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." We have to bow now; we shall justify Him forever.

At the water of Meribah Moses and Aaron grievously sinned. They committed a very high offense in smiting the rock and challenging the congregation. But the water came forth, and this at once and abundantly, as though all were right. The whole congregation and their cattle drank of it, and to all present or immediate appearances the Lord had no controversy with anyone. But afterward the Lord lets them know that their offense had not been overlooked, for by reason of it they should come short of the land of Canaan and die on the wilderness side of Jordan.

And how did the Lord Jesus in the day of His ministry here quiet the fears of unbelief before rebuked them? "Peace, be still" was said to the waves of the sea before "How is it that ye have no faith?" was said to the fears of the disciples.

We find another sample of this way of God in this scripture on which we are now meditating. David, as we have said, was morally very low in 1 Sam. 27 But he meets with no present resentment. He goes with his 600 men against the people of the south, and victory and spoils are his; and he returns to the king of Gath, and at Ziklag enriches and secures himself.

What shall we say to all this? We may well remember, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And we may also remember, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

David, however, is loved-surely he is and, in the great sense, as dearly as ever-but his sin has not been slighted by the Lord. He is loved, and a gracious witness of this is shortly afterward given him, for the Lord interposes to save him from the tremendous results of his unbelief and lies. Through the jealousy of the princes he is hindered from being found in the Philistine army which was then gathering at Apehek to march against Israel. It was the Lord who put that into their hearts to preserve His child and servant from this terrible catastrophe. He once gave Joseph favor in the

eyes of his master; He now gives David disfavor in the eyes of the princes of the Philistines. This was a most gracious interference. But the burning of Ziklag and the captivity of all that was in it are before him to let him know, and know it with a vengeance, too, that the Lord had not overlooked his sin.

But again the grace of God is very marked toward him in withholding him from the battle which was soon to be fought between Israel and the Philistines in Mount Gilboa. What would he have done had he been there? How could he have escaped the snare and mischief which his unbelief and sin had so awfully prepared for him? But God can turn the hearts of the children of men as seems best to His wisdom, and now the envy of the Philistine princes is used for David to keep him back from the slaughter on Gilboa, as Abigail had been used before to keep him back from the blood of Nabal.

But how low had David fallen! He was another man when his own spirit had told him not to touch the Lord's anointed, and when his heart smote him because he had done even so little as to cut off the skirt of the king. Such moral or spiritual changes we find in the progress of Christian life, and they warn us to draw upon the Lord, and not to think that we shall stand tomorrow because we have not fallen today. But though the Lord pardons, He chastens. He forgives the sin, but the believer still comes under His governmental dealings.

David had received Ziklag as his wages for going over to the uncircumcised. Was it not "the wages of unrighteousness"? But the Lord can cut holes in the bags (Hag. 1:6) where we put such money as this. And so He does here. Ziklag had been visited while David was in the camp of the Philistines, and Ziklag had been burned, and all therein had been taken captive-wives, children, cattle and all-by the people of the south whom David had beaten and slaughtered before. (And to add to his affliction, his own men blame him for their loss, and even speak of stoning him.)

Terrible! Nothing could exceed this but death. That, however, the good hand of God had hindered, as we read on this occasion, "They slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away." But life was spared because of God's purpose of goodness toward the offending culprit, David. And so indeed in all the chastisement of the saints. That is always spared and preserved which is needed for God's abounding grace at the last.

And now we find moral recovery leading the way to another piece of history altogether. How right! It is a bitter thing to depart from Him-a blessed thing to return to Him.

David is enabled, as we read, after all this terrible catastrophe, to encourage himself in the Lord his God (30:6). What can be more blessed? save indeed the answer which grace gives to his faith. Jonah looked afresh to the temple when he was in the whale's belly; David encouraged himself in God in the sight of the ruins of Ziklag. This was all the bitterness of his own way, but he was "strong in faith," and I know not that faith was ever more bold, and the God of all grace vindicates its boldness to the full.

If the former sight were terrible, this is precious. David now begins in faith, as he had begun in unbelief in chapter 27. Ziklag in flames was the end of that course; trophies, and spoils, the honor and the wealth of victory, crown this.

After encouraging himself in God, he acts with bravery and earnestness. The Lord puts helps and opportunities in his way, and makes circumstances to favor him, and at the end crowns him with success, giving him not only to regain all that he had lost, but to enrich himself with the spoils of the enemy.

What a witness is all this of the pleasure the Lord takes in the bold faith of His saints! David was under sore displeasure for a high-handed offense. But in spite of all that (enough to make a coward of any man) his encouraging of himself in God is thus crowned and honored of God.

Now let us go further in this fruitful scripture. The heart of man, we know, is a deceiver-"deceitful above all things"-so that "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." But it is a vagrant likewise. It is as famous for its wanderings and uncertainties as it is for its deceits. And happy indeed is the prospect of its being delivered from its wretched condition, when in the presence of His glory we are free, as I may say, from ourselves.

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