

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 35

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

A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 35, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

105 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Christian Truth Volume 35
1. Warnings and Instructions in 1 Timothy
2. An Aged Apostle's Message: Christian
3. An Aged Apostle's Message: the Fathers
4. An Aged Apostle's Message: to His Children
5. An Aged Apostle's Message: Young Men
6. Akin to the Man of Sorrows
7. All Things New
8. Another World
9. Be Kind
10. The Book and the Soul: to Those That Minister the Word
11. Building up Yourselves
12. Cheer Them on
13. Christ and His Yoke
14. Christian Mission and How to Fulfill It
15. A Clean Course
16. The Clock Stopped
17. The Closet
18. Contrasts: God's Principles and Man's Principles
19. The Cross
20. Daily
21. The Deceitfulness of Sin: a Lesson From Gehazi
22. Deliverance
23. The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved: Part 1
24. Disorder in the Land
25. Do Angels Sing?
26. The End of Christendom
27. The Energy of Faith
28. Enoch's Translation
29. False Prayer and Self-Will
30. Feet Washing
31. Advice on Fishing
32. Following Christ
33. A Form of Godliness
34. God Seeking the Sinner
35. God Will
36. Godly Exercise in Time of Trouble
37. God's Joy
38. God's Order

39. Grace
40. Grace With Salt
41. Have Faith in God
42. Haven: God Never Allows
43. Heaven Opened
44. Holy Brethren
45. The Importance of the Written Word: Lessons of the Trip to Emmaus
46. In His Steps
47. In His Steps: Learn of Me
48. Incurrible Man
49. Israel in the Wilderness
50. Itching Ears: a Mark of Our Day
51. Comments on James 5:1-10
52. Jesus Tempted of the Devil
53. Joseph and His Brethren
54. The Law of Liberty
55. Lay Aside
56. Let Go: Let God
57. Let's Sing
58. A Letter From a Doctor to His Sister
59. Light Shining Forth
60. The Lord Jesus Christ
61. Malchus and His Kinsman: the Servant's Name
62. Mark 9:49-50
63. Oh! so Little
64. Our Comfort in Waiting
65. The Passover
66. The Present Place of the Lord Jesus: a Man in the Glory
67. Psalm 150
68. The Refiner of Silver
69. Religion: What God's Word Says About It
70. The Resurrection
71. Sacrifices of God
72. Safety
73. My Salvation, My God: Written in 1652
74. The Sea of Tiberias
75. Sealed With the Holy Spirit
76. A Separated People
77. The Single Heart of Grace
78. Smyrna
79. Strength in Looking up
80. A Striking Contrast

- 81.** The Spirit's Dwelling Place
- 82.** Their Joy
- 83.** There Is Nothing Better
- 84.** A Thorn for the Flesh: Discipline Suited for Individual Soul
- 85.** Training Children
- 86.** Trials of Faith
- 87.** Unveiled Mysteries
- 88.** The Upper Room
- 89.** Wasted Years
- 90.** Waters of Quietness
- 91.** What Is Wisdom?
- 92.** When I See the Blood
- 93.** When They Had Dined
- 94.** Which Are You?
- 95.** Why Does Man Hate the Bible?
- 96.** Wisdom and Strength
- 97.** Women of Scripture: Achsah
- 98.** Women of Scripture: Daughters of Zelophehad
- 99.** Women of Scripture: Hannah
- 100.** Women of Scripture: Miriam
- 101.** Women of Scripture: Sarah
- 102.** Women of Scripture: the Call of Rebekah
- 103.** Work for the Lord
- 104.** The World's Last Chance

Christian Truth Volume 35

Warnings and Instructions in 1 Timothy

In Psalm 19, verses 7-11 we have brought before us the law, testimony, statutes, commandments, fear, and judgments of the Lord, and in verse 11 we are told, "Moreover by them is Thy servant warned." Do we appreciate the warnings given in the Scriptures? We do appreciate the warnings which are given to us in the affairs of life. They are generally given to us concerning our safety, whether as to our health, business, pleasures, or in our traveling along the highways. In this latter case we have warnings about speed, curves, etc. We do well to take heed to them, which we are inclined to do, as generally the effect of disregarding them will soon be apparent. But we are apt to neglect those warnings where the results are at a considerable distance in the future. We are inclined to regard the warnings of Scripture in this latter class, but, though the results may not soon be apparent, we should bear in mind that He who gave them makes no mistakes, and not one jot or tittle of them shall fail.

Let us now turn to 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 18-20. The setting of this epistle is built around the affairs of the church at Ephesus. The Apostle Paul had besought Timothy to remain there and "charge (or enjoin) some that they teach no other doctrine."

The Apostle Paul had spent considerable time at Ephesus, and there had been much blessing as the result of his labors. Then, when he wrote the epistle to them a few years later, as another has said, "His heart was full of the immensity of grace, and nothing in the state of the Ephesian Christians required any particular remarks adapted to that state."

But now reports had reached him that caused him to give us the warnings found in this epistle. In this first epistle to Timothy, the Church is seen in order, as to its outward form. There are certain trends of declension, as shown in verse 3 and later, but the Church, or assembly, is looked at as being able to deal with these problems. Here we have instructions to the man of God, on how to behave or conduct himself within the house of God.

If we turn to Revelation 2 and the address to the church at Ephesus, which was given a few years later, we hear the Lord's comments on their declension. There seems to be still an outward form of order, but what is put forth or done does not spring from that motive which He can value- love. They had left their first love.

In the epistle to the Ephesians, love is quite prominent. In chapter 1, verse 4, we learn that we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," In chapter 2:4-6, we have His great love brought before us, that when we were dead in sins He "quickened us together with Christ...and...raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Then in chapter 3, his prayer is that we be rooted and grounded in love and that we may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. In chapter 4:15 it says, "speaking the truth in love." Then in verse 16 we have, "that which every joint supplieth...maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Then in chapter 5, verse 2, we are exhorted to "walk in love," and in verse

25 we have that wonderful expression, "Christ...loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Chapter 6 closes with, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Getting back to our chapter, 1 Timothy 1, I believe verse 5 stands out prominently and has a peculiar attraction. You read it and meditate upon it, and then as you feel constrained to come back to it again and again, you realize something of its depth. It seems to be a grand summing up of all that the Apostle has taught before. This epistle is one of his last, evidently coming after the letters to the various churches, or assemblies. So, on account of this, it demands our special attention and consideration.

Verse 5 refers to "the end of the commandment." It is perhaps better translated, "the end of what is enjoined." Unlike the law, we do not have specific commandments in the New Testament, but it is simply as in John 15, abiding in Him, and His words abiding in us.

This grand summing up specifies three things which are to claim our attention. Let us look at them in the order given. "Charity (love) out of a pure heart." Perhaps it may be asked, What is a pure heart in the light of Scripture? We have instruction in 2 Timothy 2:22, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Then in 1 Peter 1:22 we are exhorted, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." I believe that the mind and heart of the new man are closely connected, and the exhortations as to each are similar in character. The heart is looked at as the seat of the affections, and the mind as where the intelligence of the new man is stored.

In Philippians 2:5 we are told, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Then we have in Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

We have already referred to the prayer of Ephesians 3, where the desire is that "Christ may dwell in your hearts." Then in chapter 4 we read: "If ye have heard Him and been instructed in Him according as the truth is in Jesus; namely your having put off according to the former conversation the old man...and being renewed in the spirit of your mind; and your having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness." (J.N.D. Trans.)

It seems from these scriptures then that "love out of a pure heart" can only spring from one who is born again, and that all thoughts and desires of the old man are put in the place of death, so that it is only the thoughts and desires of the new man that are in evidence, and hence it comes from a pure heart. All the selfishness and ambition which characterize the present age are not given a place in the heart and mind of the new man. It is not a state reached once and for all practically, but it is a matter of being before the Lord constantly in self-judgment.

The Lord passes us through a school of training here in our wilderness journey, similar to Israel of old as brought before us in Deuteronomy 8: "To humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart...that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."

This "love out of a pure heart" would be that love which Christ ever manifested down here, proceeding out of the hearts of His people. One is reminded of what is said in John 13: "Having

loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

The second thing brought before us in 1 Timothy 1:5, is "a good conscience." Again we might ask, Just what is a good conscience? Perhaps we might get some light on the operations of the conscience from Romans 2:13-15, which is really a parenthesis in the chapter. It describes the Gentiles before the cross, not having God's law, thrown entirely upon their consciences in relation to the witness of God in creation, which was manifested to them. They could show the work of the law written in their hearts. This testimony of God which they had, depending on their submission to it, could produce the work of the law (or what the law should produce) in their hearts. How did it operate? Well, their thoughts the meanwhile were accusing or else excusing one another. If our thoughts accuse us or excuse us, we have not a good conscience. When we find this going on, we need to get before the Lord in self-judgment and own our state before Him. Then, and only then, can we have a good conscience. When in our thoughts we are excusing ourselves, we are virtually saying, If conditions had been different, we would not have failed. The Lord never had to excuse Himself, and neither would we if we were in communion with Him.

The Apostle Paul says in Acts 24:16, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." He did not want a conscience where his thoughts were continually accusing or else excusing. There cannot be real spiritual progress where there is this accusing or excusing.

We now arrive at the third thing, in verse 5- "faith unfeigned." It refers, I believe, to the manner in which I hold that which has been revealed, which I hold by faith. Where something is feigned, there is a pretense to something which is not real. When such is the case, we are simply deceiving ourselves, and under such conditions could hardly be a channel which the Lord can use. See 2 Timothy 3:13 and James 1:22.

These three things are followed by the statement in verses 6 and 7: "From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm," or, as in another translation, "or concerning what they so strenuously affirm."

Where there is a lack of any of these necessary things, we are swerving from the course; and though there be "good words and fair speeches," there is not the power of the Spirit of God, "for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ." A writer of a former generation used the expression, "Too much sail will upset the ballastless boat."

In the latter part of this chapter-1 Timothy 1:18-20-we have an illustration of the result of such a course-"shipwreck."

"Holding faith" refers, I believe, to what has been committed to the Church, as in the latter part of verse 4. It is a little clearer in the J.N.D. Translation: "Which bring questionings rather than further God's dispensation, which is in faith."

In verse 20 we have two men brought before us, Hymenaeus and Alexander, who, evidently allowing their minds to work, in connection with what had been revealed, made shipwreck. From what is said of them here, we could gather that they were those who truly had been born again, as we are told that the discipline was for the purpose of their learning not to blaspheme. Their course

was the very opposite of girding up the loins of the mind according to 1 Peter 1:13, and also 2 Corinthians 10:5, "Casting down imaginations (or reasonings)...and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." These two men then had evidently gone on in a way that ruined them for being vessels suited for the public testimony of the Lord. They possibly could be salvaged, but for the present they were a hindrance and as such to be avoided.

The mention of "shipwreck" brings to mind very vividly a scene off the coast of England, in the Strait of Dover. There were several wrecks of small war vessels, with parts of their superstructures above the water, even at high tide. Some of them were German vessels, some English, and some American. Their positions were shown on the map at that point, and their names given, so that they were well-known. It was necessary then in steering a vessel in those waters, to avoid them, and to steer one's course around them, as in Romans 16:17. There was the danger of the tide sweeping one into them, with damage resulting not only from collision with them, but a hidden danger of possible explosions from unexploded shells, bombs, or torpedoes still on board. We are told in 2 Timothy 3:5 that there are some from whom we are to turn away. So we are to steer our courses around those who have made shipwreck of the faith.

Getting back to 1 Timothy 1:18, we have mentioned, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy." I believe that the expression 'this charge' is the same as in verse 3, and also the same as "commandment" in verse 5. It is rendered "enjoin" and is used seven times in this epistle—chapter 4:11 and chapter 6:13,17. When we see the different ways in which it is used, we begin to realize something of the solemnity of what is here brought before us.

What we have just been considering in 1 Timothy 1 as to the pathway has been connected more with the doctrine and the manner of behavior which should accompany it. In chapter 6, however, we have exhortations that are more connected with the material things of life. In verse 5 we have men spoken of as "destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." This line of things, supposing that gain is godliness, is the opposite of that which the Lord used when tempted of Satan, in Matthew 4:4—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In connection with the material side of things, it does not mention shipwreck, but does mention that which accompanies shipwreck. Verse 9 says, "which drown men in destruction and perdition." Then it refers to the love of money, "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith (or wandered from the faith), and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

The man of faith, here called the man of God, is exhorted to flee these things. There is danger connected with them. The warning used is as though some great catastrophe is about to take place ahead, and he is told to flee; he is to lose no time in getting away.

He is to fight the good fight of faith, or to strive earnestly in it. It is a good fight. That is, it is worthy of all the energy that can be brought to bear upon it.

Then follows the most solemn "enjoin" of all those brought before us. It is done as in the sight of God, and the Lord's witnessing "the good confession" before Pontius Pilate: "that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then we shall be associated with Him in all His glory, and what a range of glory is here associated with His appearing!

This is followed by injunctions to those that are rich, not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who is brought before us as the One who gives us richly all things to enjoy. The opposite, then, of heaping up riches, is to be rich in good works and willing to distribute.

In closing I would call attention to the last clause of verse 19: "That they may lay hold of what is really life." (J.N.D. Trans.). Man calls life that which his wealth or position enables him to do, which others not so favored are unable to do. But here, what is really life is not that, but is association with those whom God has chosen, the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him.

This can only be accomplished by getting our eyes off the things which are seen and fixing them upon the things which are unseen, realizing that the things which are seen are but for a moment, but the others work "for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

An Aged Apostle's Message: Christian

3. We now have a warning against the world. "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." 1 John 2:15. This is indeed a solemn word for any Christian whose heart is set upon anything in this world. Love of the world and love of the Father do not go together. They are opposed to each other in every way. The world has murdered God's Son, and this has revealed its state of utter enmity against God. God has indeed raised Him up from the dead, and crowned Him with glory and honor at His own right hand. The Holy Ghost has come down to witness to the fact of His resurrection and of His exaltation to be a Prince and a Savior and to give repentance and remission of sins. The world, however, still rejects Him. Christ is not of the world. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" are of the world, but Christ is of the Father, and the world has hated Him, and cast Him out.

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that our blessed Lord Jesus is rejected in the world. Go where you will-into the busy throng, society, fashionable circles, even among the mass of professing Christians-and talk of Christ or His things, and there is no relish for it, no response in people's hearts. They turn away, or their mouths are closed. Many a professing Christian is dumb the moment Christ's name is mentioned. And in many instances conversation on the topic will not be tolerated, while the most insignificant bit of neighborhood -gossip will be borne or even relished. Anything and everything but Christ! The very name-the thought of Him even-is distasteful.

And not only is there no heart to receive Christ, but there is positive enmity against Him. By the verdict of this world Jesus was delivered up to die, and was nailed as a malefactor to the cross. People may say now that the Jews and Pilate did that, and may thus seek to clear themselves of all responsibility. But Pilate was the representative of the world power at Jerusalem when he delivered Jesus up to die, and thus involved the world in the guilt of that terrible deed. Has the world ever repented of this awful sin? Let its own course answer. A message from heaven has been calling to repentance, but the world has not repented. For more than nineteen hundred years God has been, as it were, beseeching men to be reconciled, but the world remains still in enmity. Through grace, individuals have repented and have been reconciled to God. The world, though, "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," has no ear to hear, and continues in its course, ruled by "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

The world is guilty of the blood of Jesus, and yet goes on amusing itself as if nothing has happened. The hum of business, the cares of life, the sound of the harp and the organ, the theater, the concert, the ball, and the ten thousand varieties of amusement, worldly pleasures, and worldly follies, are used of Satan to ensnare his victims, and drown the cry of guilt in the conscience until death carries them away, or judgment closes over the scene.

Beloved brethren, are we practically outside of all this? Have we found God's Christ in glory an object that so fills and satisfies the heart, that for us the world has lost all its charms? Where are our hearts? Where are our affections? Are they with Christ in glory? or with the world that crucified

Him?

But perhaps some reader of these lines is saying to himself, "It is impossible that this world which has rejected and slain my blessed Lord should draw my heart away from Him who loved me and gave Himself for me." But this is the very danger to which the young men are exposed. It is this that they are warned against, and if there had been no danger there would have been no warning. There is that in us which answers to the world, and nothing but the Word of God abiding in us, and keeping us in communion with Christ, can preserve us from its allurements. The Apostle Paul had to record of one who had labored with him, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. Sorrowful words! "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12. An apostle's presence was not enough to keep Demas. Our strength is only in Christ. If we abide in Him, and His Word abide in us, we shall be kept securely. Otherwise our hearts will be drawn away, and we shall find our affections entangled in a world that is far from God. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" is written upon all that is under the sun, and all is estranged from God. The fathers have learned this experimentally, but the young men still have it to learn; and unless they abide in their stronghold, having the sword in readiness, they will surely be overcome by the wiles of the devil.

4. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1 John 2:17. The judgment of God is coming upon this world, both as a system that has fallen under the power of Satan, and as a physical world that has been ruined by the presence of sin. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words of the Lord Jesus shall not pass away. The world may go on with its business, its pleasures, its follies and its sins, forgetting its guilt in murdering God's Son, but God has not forgotten. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord with a hard heart, guilty of his brother's blood which cried from the ground, and sought to make himself happy in a world far from God. Hundreds of years rolled on, and the descendants of Cain multiplied on the earth. A city was built, the sound of the hammer was heard on brass and iron, and the harp and the organ made mirth for those whose hearts knew not God. Thus the world moved on its course, and perhaps Abel and his blood were quite forgotten, but the flood came and swept them all away.

The blood of Christ indeed speaks better things than the blood of Abel. It cries from the throne and speaks pardon and peace to every repentant sinner. The redeemed in glory, the gathering of Israel, and the blessing of the nations in a future day, all witness that the blood of Christ speaks better things than the blood of Abel. But the rejection of that Savior, and the shedding of that blood, have crowned the world's guilt, and He who once came in grace will come again in judgment. "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: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." 2 Thess. 1:7-9. This is terrible indeed to think of, but it will come as surely as the flood came in the days of Noah. It is the state of the world in its enmity against God that will

_bring down this judgment. O beloved brethren, have we learned the true character of this world? Have we seen it in the light of the cross as the scene of Satan's power, and characterized by relentless enmity against the Son of God? Are our hearts far away from this scene of evil over which God's judgment is about to sweep as a flame of fire? "Remember Lot's wife." She was outside of Sodom, but her heart was in the doomed scene, and she looked back, and became a monument of God's judgment. "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."

Peter goes further and tells us not only of the judgment of the wicked, but of the dissolution of the heavens and the earth as well. The old world perished by water in the days of Noah. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. 3:7,10.

Thus, reader, we have God's estimate of the world, and His judgment of it. It is morally corrupt and guilty of the blood of God's well-beloved Son, and it is doomed to judgment. However bright its allurements, however attractive its charms, and however great its promises of good, Satan is behind it all with his enchantments, to charm and to seduce his victims and make them slaves to his power. "The whole world lies in the wicked one." 1 John 5:19 (J.N.D. Trans.). May the Lord keep us from listening to the voice of the charmer. May we so cleave to Christ that Satan can have no power against us. This is our only safety. If the heart is full of Christ, and God's Word abides in us, forming the heart and governing all its movements, Satan with all his allurements through the world will be driven back. Thus it was with Christ. Satan found nothing in Him but the Word of God. It was the sword of the Spirit. Three times over he was made to feel the edge of that trusty blade, "It is written," "It is written," "It is written," and his enchantments had no power. Alas! too often he finds something else in us-`the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes," or "the pride of life," and then we fall a prey to his seductions, and have to learn by bitter experience what the world is, and the folly of giving it a place in our hearts and affections.

May we be kept with the Word of God abiding in us-the Word by which we were born again, and by which we do the will of God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

An Aged Apostle's Message: the Fathers

Many souls are like the prodigal in Luke 15. When he came to himself he had a deep sense of his sinfulness, and he resolved to return and hoped to get a hired servant's place within his father's door. Little did he anticipate the welcome which awaited him. It is so with thousands. They come to themselves; that is, they find out they are good-for-nothing sinners, and mercy is the most they hope for. To escape from hell and to get inside the door of heaven is the highest thought they dare to contemplate. Knowing God is merciful, they hope to be spared eternal punishment. Yet such human thoughts fall far short of the grace of God!

When God saves a soul, He does it in a manner worthy of Himself and for His own glory. When He blesses, He does it according to His delight in Christ His Son, and His estimate of the infinite worth of His sacrifice. Grace reigns through righteousness; and it is grace, perfect and free, which awaits all who come to Him.

The heavy-hearted prodigal "arose, and came to his father." Luke 15:20. It is easy to picture his miserable condition, his downcast look, his faltering step, his hesitating manner, as his father's house comes in view. How will he be received? Will he be turned away? Will he be kept waiting outside a closed door, or be ushered into the hired servant's room without even seeing his father's face? The thought of the father's love and grace never entered the repentant prodigal's mind.

But what does the Word say? "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Luke 15:20. The wayward wanderer had never ceased to occupy the heart of that loving father. Love reigned there. And when yet a great way off, his watchful eye discerned the lost one and, filled with compassion, the willing feet sped, and, casting his arms around his neck, the caresses of love told of pardon and peace and reconciliation, even before he had time to confess his sin. The eye saw, the heart was filled with compassion, the feet sped, the arms embraced, and the lips covered with kisses the son who would beg for a servant's place. The father knew him well. Nothing but genuine repentance had broken down that proud heart, and brought him there. The lips of the prodigal only told what that loving father already knew.

How wonderful is the story of grace! This is but a picture of God's welcome to you and me. There is not a single rebuke or reproach, nothing but love for those who return to Him in self-judgment. What a revelation for our souls; God occupied with returning prodigals; God's eye upon us; God's heart yearning over us; God's hastening to welcome us; God's reconciling us then and there with the kisses of peace! God is in all. Little do we realize what Christ and His work are to God. Little do we enter into His thoughts of grace, grace reigning through righteousness, the fruit of that finished redemption work.

The poor prodigal, folded in those arms of love, with the fond kisses of a father's grace upon his cheek, tells out his confession of sin-"I have sinned... and am no more worthy." It was a true and good confession of what he had done and what he was. To be right with God, we must have those

two things thoroughly out-I have sinned and I am the sinner. The death of Christ has met both, for at the cross God has judged both my sins and me. Christ took all upon Him there. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 2:24. And God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." 2 Cor. 5:21. And Christ is risen. It is enough. Grace reigns through righteousness. I judge and confess all, and on the ground of Christ's finished work receive all that grace can devise. So it was with this poor wanderer. So it is with everyone who comes back to God.

His thought about being a hired servant-part of his professed confession in the far-off country-never crossed his lips. How could he utter it when folded in a father's fond embrace? No; but when he reached the words "thy son," though owning his unworthiness of that relation, we read, "The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." Luke 15:22-24. How great were his blessings: the best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, the feast, the merriment, the music, and the dancing! In a moment, all was changed. That quiet house becomes at once the scene of joy and festivity. The father, the son, and the whole household (except one) participated in the merrymaking. But first the son must be fitted for that joyful scene.

"Bring forth the best robe," says the commanding voice of the father, "and put it on him." And willing servants hastened to obey. The robe is ready, prepared against that day. It is "the best." An inferior one might have satisfied the prodigal, and far less than what God provides for us might have satisfied you or me. But God blesses.

"Not to suit my thoughts of fitness, But His wondrous thoughts of love."

The righteousness of God is "unto all and upon all them that believe." Rom. 3:22. This is God's best robe, prepared and waiting, as it were, for returning prodigals. It is Christ alone, the righteousness of God, that can fit us for His eye. "Put it on him." It is "upon all" them that believe. We have nothing to do but to stand still and see the salvation of God and to submit to God's righteousness in simple faith.

"Clad in this robe, how bright I shine;

Angels possess not such a dress.

Angels have not a robe like mine;

Jesus the Lord's my righteousness."

The robe is new, perfect, and the best. Nothing short of it will suit the Father's eye and heart and home. In Christ we are complete (Col. 2:10). What a change from the nakedness and filth of the far-off country! Marvel of grace! This is the gospel of God. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Eph. 1:7.

"And put a ring on his hand." Wondrous favor! May we not learn from this that we are received back forever? The believer is not only in Christ, but sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). We are saved and set in God's eternal favor.

"And shoes on his feet." The reconciled one has to walk henceforth in the presence of his father. He fits him for it. The Christian, clothed with Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit, has to walk before God in communion with Him. It is God's grace that teaches us. It is God's provision that fits us. It is God's power that enables us. And "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6.

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry." The son being fitted in every way for the position of favor he is henceforth to occupy, the father now commands a feast. He and the son and the servants have their part in the joy. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:10. God feasts when a soul is saved, and brings His loved ones into His banqueting house to feast with Him on the riches of His grace in Christ. Blessed communion!

Finally, note well the reason the father gives for the feast. "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." Luke 15:24. "This my son." Beloved fellow believer, this is what God says of you. He is our Father. We are His sons. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [children] of God." 1 John 3:1. We cry, "Abba, Father." Rom. 8:15. We are brought right home to God, and we are at home in His presence. Here we rest, and here we feast. Here we enjoy the blest relationship of sons forever. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And we were dead. This was our moral state. But now we are alive. We have "passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). We are alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11; 8:2). Eternal life is ours in the Son (1 John 5:11).

We were lost. But the Savior God found us when we were still far off. We would have been lost forever but for His grace. Through grace we are found forever. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. How blessed to be at home now-at home with God. Believers have left the far-off country forever. By faith and in spirit we enter now where God our Father is. As the well-known hymn puts it-

"In spirit there already, Soon we ourselves shall be."

"And they began to be merry." Beloved reader, have you? The world's merriment is of short duration. Death and judgment are knocking at the door. But once you come to God and receive His grace, then heavenly merriment, spiritual, pure, everlasting, is yours. "They began to be merry." Truly for God and His loved ones it will never cease.

An Aged Apostle's Message: to His Children

In the first chapter of his first epistle, the Apostle John presents to us the Word of life - the eternal Word - the eternal Son of the Father - in whom eternal life subsisted, and in whom, as a man, it was manifested in time down here in this world; and all this that we might have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Then there is a message declaring God's inflexible holiness - light admitting no degree of darkness - speaking at the same time of the blood that cleanses from all sin, and gives fitness to be in the light of that holy presence.

In the opening of the next chapter we have, in the Advocate with the Father, the divine provision for failure in the walk of those who have been brought into the light, and the means of restoration to communion when it has been broken by sin. Then we have the great characteristic traits of the divine life in man - obedience and love. These were perfectly displayed in Christ; and Christ having become our life, these are the test of reality in us.

Having established these fundamental principles, the aged Apostle goes on to address his children, first all together, and then in three classes - "fathers," "young men," and "babes." There is that which was common to all; and then there is that which was peculiar to each of these three classes, all presented in beautiful order.

We will first look at that which was common to all. This was forgiveness of sins. He writes to them all as having been forgiven. In doing so, he calls them "children." The word "little" is not in the original. When he divides them into three classes, "fathers," "young men," and "little children," the last is a different word, which does mean "little children," or "babes." But in the first instance it is simply "children," and the term includes all that the Apostle addresses in the epistle, the same as in verse 1 and in verse 28 of the same chapter: "I write unto you...children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." He does not write to them in order that they might receive forgiveness, but because they had already received it. He writes to them as those whom God had forgiven for the name's sake of His beloved Son.

He had already written that which would test the reality of those who bore the name of Christ, and which would distinguish between the true and the false. But this was not intended in any wise to shake the confidence of any who had really been born into the family of God. Those who, without reality, and in carelessness of heart, had taken a place among the children of God, might well tremble at what the Apostle had written, and which necessarily condemned them, as when he says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

These were the solemn and heart-searching words before which the careless, the hypocrite, or the false teachers might well pause, consider their bearings, and learn in the truth whether their

profession was real or whether they were blindly drifting on in darkness, soon to be plunged into the dark abyss of eternal woe. But solemn as the warnings are which are given to such in God's Word, they are never intended to shake or to disturb in any degree, the peace of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus, and who are seeking with purpose of heart to serve and follow Him. On the contrary, this aged Apostle and father seeks to assure his children in the most happy way by telling them that he writes to them for the very reason that their sins had been forgiven them for Jesus' name's sake. Not a cloud would he throw over the mind of the youngest or the feeblest in all the family of God. He would have all in the full blessed consciousness, and unclouded assurance, that they were in the light, and without a spot upon them - the youngest babe as much as the most aged father or the most holy apostle, washed and made whiter than snow in "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son," which "cleanseth us from all sin."

And it is blessed to our poor hearts to know that the knowledge of forgiveness is not something to be attained only when the Christian course has been nearly run - perhaps only on a deathbed, or, it may be, not till the poor storm-tossed soul stands before the great white throne, overwhelmed with terror and crushed with dark uncertainty while it awaits the sentence which is to fix its eternal destiny. No, dear reader, forgiveness of sins meets us at the very threshold of Christianity, and the assurance of it greets our souls the moment we believe the gospel of our salvation. Christ is the meeting-point between our souls and God. It is a Christ, however, who died, who was buried and who was raised again, and the moment we meet God in Him, we find Him to be a Christ who has borne our sins, having been delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. Thus, all is settled between our souls and God, and "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 4:24,25; 5:1.

There surely are Christian attainments, but forgiveness of sins is not one of them, for if I have not forgiveness of sins I am not a Christian at all. My sins are still between my soul and God, and exclude me from His holy presence, leaving me under judgment and exposed to eternal wrath. Forgiveness cannot, therefore, be a Christian attainment at all. I know there may be such a thing as being forgiven and not knowing it, but this is not a normal condition of soul. It is a result, either of wrong teaching, or of inadequate apprehension of the truth. The very gospel that announces salvation to the lost and forgiveness to the guilty, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, gives also in the most assuring terms the knowledge of forgiveness to all who believe it. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Christ Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38,39.

In such terms as these the blessed gospel of God's grace speaks to the poor sinner, and it gives assurance to the one who believes it. It speaks unconditional and eternal pardon to him who, falling down before God as helpless, guilty and lost, believes in Jesus; and it assures such a one that his sins are blotted out forever and his guilt canceled by the atoning blood of the cross, never to be brought to light again. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," is the conscience-purging word of the blessed God who pardons through faith in Jesus' blood, and the words John writes to his children are in happy confirmation of this blessed truth. "I write unto you...children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Happy children! Their sins may have been many, yes, more than the hairs of their heads, and they may be conscious that they are poor, feeble, failing creatures still, and Satan may thunder in their consciences, and seek

to accuse and condemn, but the word of Him who cannot lie sustains their souls in unclouded peace: "Your sins are forgiven you."

And it is "for His name's sake." Were it for anything in us, we might well question, doubt, and fear. But if it is "for His name's sake," who in heaven or earth or hell can challenge our title? God has owned that blessed Savior and exalted His name above all. He has given Him a name that is above every name. Before that name all thrones and dominions must yield subjection, and every knee - all angels, all men, all demons - must bow. It is the name of Jesus. It is the name of Him who suffered on the cross, whose blood was shed for the putting away of sin, who by His atoning sacrifice has infinitely glorified God, and who has vanquished forever the adversary of our souls. "For His name's sake," God forgives.

Dear reader, have you believed God's testimony to that wonderful name? Have you believed in the name of Jesus? Then listen to that dear old Apostle that knew Him so well, and the cleansing power of His precious blood, and hear him addressing you among the children to whom he writes these words: "I write unto you...children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake."

An Aged Apostle's Message: Young Men

We have already seen that the fathers are characterized by having "known Him that is from the beginning." Here (1 John 2:13) we learn that the young men are characterized by having "overcome the wicked one." In his second address to the young men he mentions the secret of their strength, and warns them against the world. Loving the world and loving the Father are incompatible. All the elements which make the world what it is have their source in the world, not in the Father. Then the world and its lust pass away, while he that does the will of God abides forever.

Let us notice these different points:

The young men have overcome the wicked one. The strength of divine life is in them, and they have been crowned with victory in the conflicts they have sustained with the enemy. It is not that all conflict is ended and all danger past, but they have realized, in conflict, a power which is superior to that of the enemy. If they have a powerful foe, they know and possess a power greater than his which they can use and put the enemy to flight. They are characterized by the remarkable fact that they "have overcome the wicked one." Satan, who rules the darkness of the world and who is the great enemy of God's people, cannot stand before these young men. This is a wondrous fact that may well fill us with holy boldness and courage in meeting this relentless and untiring foe.

The divine life, directed by the Word of God, is the secret of strength in the young men. "Ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." In Ephesians 6, where it is a question of conflict with spiritual powers of wickedness, the Apostle says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." This is the source of all strength for conflict. In ourselves we have no strength, but in Him we are strong. Christ is the believer's life, and this is directed in the believer by the Word of God. Against this, Satan has no power. When Satan meets Christ in the believer, he meets One who has already vanquished him, and destroyed his power. In death (expression of utter weakness) Christ destroyed him who had the power of death, so that the weakness of Christ is stronger than the power of Satan. Satan did his worst against Christ at the cross, but Christ rose from the dead in the power of a life that Satan could not touch. Resurrection proclaimed complete, eternal victory for Christ. Satan well knows that he is a vanquished foe and that, at the appointed time, Christ will cast him into the lake of fire. If we meet Satan, therefore, in the power of Christ, he immediately flees. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7.

It is not only that Christ has personally gained the victory over Satan, but that He did this for our deliverance. He took part in flesh and blood, "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." Heb. 2:14, 15. In the death of Christ all that Satan could use to terrify the conscience, as well as all that could bring down the judgment of God, was swept away, and thus the believer is emancipated from the condition of bondage and fear into which he had been

plunged by sin and the power of Satan.

But this is not all. The believer is made a partaker of divine life. He possesses the very life in which Christ's victory over Satan was displayed—life in resurrection—life as Christ imparted it to His disciples when He breathed on them after His resurrection—life in the Spirit. Christ was made alive in the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18); the believer lives in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); and he has "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," as a delivering power (Rom. 8:2). It is life in Christ, of which the Holy Ghost is the spring and power, in the believer. Satan cannot touch this life. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18.

In this divine life lies the secret of the young men's strength. They have the energy of Christ in them, and the Word of God abiding in them. These direct the divine life according to all that He is as an object filling the heart and governing its desires. The Word of God expresses what that life is in all its varied characteristics, and if the Word abides in us, it forms the heart by filling it with Christ as an object, reproducing His life in us. Paul could say, "For to me to live is Christ." And if this is what Satan finds in us, what can he do? He is in the presence of One who has already conquered him, and he can only flee.

How blessed then to "abide in Him-," as the Apostle exhorts in verse 28, and to have God's Word abiding in us, as in verse 14, so that we always may be able to overcome the wicked one. The power of Satan has been broken in the cross, but he has many wiles, and these we need to withstand. "We are not ignorant of his devices," as the Apostle said to the Corinthians, and we need to watch lest he "get an advantage" (2 Cor. 2:11). Our safety lies in having God's Word abiding in us. It is this that forms the heart, according to Christ, and directs the movements of the divine life in the soul. It becomes also the sword of the Spirit to the Christian warrior, and enables him to repel every assault of the wicked one. The Word is the Word of God's grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32), and it is also the sword of the Spirit. May we prize it, both for what it gives us and for that against which it preserves us.

Akin to the Man of Sorrows

Perhaps you sometimes feel as if billow after billow were passing over you-sickness, bereavement, poverty, and crosses of all kinds. Don't be discouraged; remember, it is the bruised herbs that are the most fragrant; it is the pressed grapes from which we get the wine; the corn is first bruised before we get the bread.

"Stars shine brightest on the darkest night, spices smell sweetest when pounded, vines are the better for bleeding, gold looks the brighter for scouring, juniper smells sweetest in the fire, and chamomile is spread by being trodden upon.

"And so it is with the bruised and chastened saints-there is something about them akin to the Man of Sorrows! The bee sucks honey out of the bitterest herbs; so God will by affliction teach His children to get sweet knowledge, sweet obedience, and sweet experiences out of all the bitter afflictions and trials with which He exercises them."

All Things New

A friend of ours tells the story of a little child who had been born blind, an only child who was the apple of his mother's eye. The two were constant companions and in the summertime the mother, who sought to make her eyes the windows into the senses and soul of her unfortunate son, would take him out into the fields and talk to him about their color, and the blue sky, and the multi-tinted wild flowers all about them. But the lad, because he had never seen color, could not picture what it is.

"What is color, Mummy?" he would ask. "Can you smell color?"

"No," the child's mother would reply, and then she would try to describe it to one who had never known anything but blackness.

"Can you feel it, or taste it, or hear it?" the boy would ask.

"No, you can do none of those things, dear," she would answer slowly. "Color is-well, it's just color." She had to give up trying to explain color to her boy.

One day a wonderful thing happened! A surgeon was found who said that he believed that he could give sight to the lad. In due course a series of operations was performed. After a long siege, during which time his eyes were completely bandaged, and another period when they were removed layer by layer gradually, the boy was able, at length, to distinguish light from accustomed darkness, and finally he received perfect vision.

That very day, in the springtime, mother and son walked in the garden of their home, and for the first time the child saw the blue of the heavens, the glory of the flowers, and the wondrous restful greens of the trees and grass. In ecstasy the youngster turned to his mother and looking into her face, cried out, "O Mummy, why didn't you tell me it was all so beautiful?"

If only we could explain to a sin-darkened world the loveliness and beauty of Christ, the joy of salvation and life in Him, and how changed everything becomes when He dwells in the heart! For things are different from what they once were, when we belong to Him and He is ours. This change has been beautifully expressed in a stanza of a well-loved hymn:

Heaven above is softer blue,

Earth around is sweeter green!

Something lives in every hue

Christless eyes have never seen.

Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,

Flowers with deeper beauty shine,

Since I know, as now I know,
I am His and He is mine.

Another World

I am fascinated by old mansions. I never pass up an opportunity to go through an imposing dwelling, especially an old one. I've had the chance to tour a few of these stately residences with their priceless oak paneling, their immense third-floor ballrooms, their elaborate stables and servants' quarters. But the thought never escapes me that the builders, most of whom are now in eternity, had to leave these homes.

A few years ago I went through a \$4,000,000 mansion (it was more of a castle) on the west coast. The furniture, oriental rugs, priceless paintings, chandeliers, etc., were elegant, but the man who financed it all is gone, his astute brain and nimble fingers now crumbling back to dust. We were told that his income was several millions of dollars a year, yet today he is worth no more than the beggar's corpse picked up off the streets of Calcutta and burned!

John Wesley had been shown through an elaborate English estate by its noble owner. When the tour was finished, Wesley turned to his host and said, "I, too, have a relish for such things, but there is another world!" If you are a materialist, it will pay you to remember that.

Be Kind

"So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, Lovest thou Me more than these?" John 21:15.

The moment that the Lord chose for this question appears to carry a great lesson for us. Supposing a brother gets astray and backslides a little, do you know the way to restore him? Would you go and tell him he has slipped away? That will not do him much good. Very likely if you were to say to him, "Brother, come and have a cup of tea with me," and then talk to him about the Lord, that would help him.

After the seven disciples had been fishing all night and had caught nothing, they were, no doubt, cold, hungry and disappointed. What does the Lord do? He says, "Come and dine." They get both warmth and food. Do you know a spiritually cold and consequently hungry brother? Feed him, warm him up. Give him spiritual food, I mean. The great thing for you and me to do is to warm him. He needs cherishing and nourishing, warmth and food. It is always thus put in Scripture. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Eph. 5:29. What is the nourishing? Food. What is the cherishing? Warmth.

Beloved friends, I am quite sure if we took this way, the Lord's way, with a saint that has got a little aside, we should do real shepherding work. You try and get such to your house, give him a nice cup of tea, and then speak about the Lord, and you will be able to help such, minister to their soul's need, and recover and restore them. It is a great thing to be able to restore a person, and the way in which Peter is here restored is very touching. I am fully persuaded that this story as related by John is given with deep design of God for our instruction and profit.

The Book and the Soul: to Those That Minister the Word

Many years ago there was a great preacher whose name was Paul Gerhardt. He was an earnest Christian man, and loved to preach about the Lord Jesus. The ruler of the country, however, did not like that kind of preaching, so he said that Gerhardt must either give up preaching or be banished from the country. Paul Gerhardt replied that it would be very hard for him to leave his country and friends, and to go with his family among strangers where they would have nothing to live on, but he would rather die than preach anything else than what the Bible taught. As a consequence, he and his little family were banished.

At the end of their first day's journey, they rested for the night at a little inn. The little children were crying with hunger and clinging to their mother, but she had no food to give them and no money with which to buy any. She had tried to keep up her spirits all day, but now she began to cry too. This made Paul Gerhardt very heavyhearted. He left his family and went alone into the dark woods to pray. In this time of great trouble there was no one to whom he could go for help but to God.

While alone praying, a text of Scripture came to mind. It seemed as if an angel had come and whispered it to him: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5.

This gave great comfort. "Yes," he thought, "though I am banished from my home and friends, and do not know where to take my wife and children for shelter, yet God, my God, sees me in this dark woods. He knows all about us. Now is the time to trust in Him. He will see us through; He will 'bring it to pass.'"

He was so happy in thinking on this text, and so thankful to God for bringing it into his mind, that as he walked among the trees, he composed a poem about it. Each verse of the poem begins with two or three words of the text, so that when you have read through the hymn, you get the whole text. The poem reads:

Commit thy way, O weeper-
The cares that fret thy soul-
To thine Almighty Keeper,
Who makes the world to roll.
Unto the Lord, who quieteth
The wind, and cloud, and sea;
Oh! doubt not He provideth
A footpath, too, for thee.

Trust also, for 'tis useless
To murmur and forbode;
The Almighty arm is doubtless
Full strong to bear thy load.
In Him hide all thy sorrow
And bid thy fears good night;
He'll make a glorious morrow
To crown thy head with light.
And He shall bring it near thee,
The good thou long hast sought;
Though now it seems to fly thee,
Thou shalt, ere long, be brought.
To pass from grief to gladness,
From night to clearest day,
When doubts, and fears, and sadness
Shall all have passed away.

When he had finished composing these verses, he returned to the inn and told his wife about the precious text that had come into his mind and the poem that he had composed about it. She soon dried her tears and began to be as cheerful and as trustful as her husband. The husband and wife knelt down together and prayed, resolving to commit their "way unto the Lord," and leave it for Him to "bring it to pass" as He saw fit. Then, after writing down his poem, they went to bed.

Before they fell asleep, a great noise was heard at the door of the inn. When the landlord opened the door, a man on horseback was standing before it and said in a loud voice:

"I am a messenger. I come from Duke Christian, and I am trying to find a minister named Paul Gerhardt, who has just been banished. Do you know whether he has passed this way?"

"Paul Gerhardt?" said the landlord, "Why, yes, he is in this house, but he has just gone to bed and I can't disturb him now."

"But you must," said the messenger. "I have a very important letter for him from the Duke; let me see him at once." The landlord immediately went upstairs and told Gerhardt, who came down to see the messenger.

The messenger handed him a large, sealed letter and, to his great joy, he read in it that the good Duke Christian had heard of the banishment of himself and his family and had written to him saying, "Come into my country, Paul Gerhardt, and you shall have a home, plenty to live on and

liberty to preach the gospel just as much as you please."

Gerhardt went up and told his wife, and together they praised God for His love. The next morning the whole family started off with glad hearts and cheerful feet toward their new home.

Building up Yourselfes

Read Jude 20-25

Believers instinctively feel the need of being edified, or built up. Their souls look for food and they are conscious that their inward man requires renewing. They desire to know for their profit and blessing the things of God as set forth in the Scriptures of truth. But all have to learn on the principle that God is the giver; we are only receivers and we have nothing in ourselves, and yet we possess all things in Christ (1 Cor. 3:22).

There are three ways in which edification, or building up, is presented to us in the epistles:

We have gifts such as teachers and pastors from Christ in ascension, for the perfecting of the saints, with a view to the work of the ministry and with a view to the edifying or building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).

We have the beautiful exercises of the different members of the body, fitted together and connected by every joint of supply as from the Head, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16).

3. We have self-edification, or building up, of our most holy faith (Jude 20).

We judge this third character of building up to be of particular importance at this time.

Often, where there has been the most faithful and the most spiritual ministry of the truth, there are those who have profited but little by it. Why is this? Is it not because they, if exercised about it, have trusted to be built up by others, and neglected self-building up? Few of us gather up lasting profit from any ministry, however excellent and spiritual, unless we receive the truth, not as we would an ordinary matter of instruction, but from the mouth of God, after having been assured it is according to His Word.

When there is the absence of such exercise of soul before God, it not only betrays a serious lack of spiritual mindedness, but also that there is no small amount of carnal confidence, a self-sufficient competency for attending to the things of God instead of a lowly state of dependence on the Lord. We do well to lay it to heart as to whether we are intellectually dealing with divine truth, or being led and taught by the Spirit of God, and hearkening to what He says.

It should be a daily question as to how much we are occupied in building ourselves up on our most holy faith. We all know as regards our bodies the need of continual cleansing, taking in frequent supplies of nourishment, protecting ourselves from bad external influences, and of availing ourselves of seasonal refreshment and comfort.

But what about our souls? Are we hating the garment spotted by the flesh? Are we carefully seeking to keep ourselves unspotted from the world and purposing not to touch the unclean thing? Is self-judgment before God habitual with us? Do we exercise ourselves to have always a good conscience, void of offense toward God and toward man? Do we go to the Word of eternal truth

morning by morning to read, to meditate on it in dependence on the Spirit, to pray over it and to take it in as food for the renewal of our inner man?

Do we hide the Word of God in our hearts that we may not sin against Him? Do we thus have to do with God and the Word of His grace which is able to build us up and thoroughly furnish us unto all good works? Do we seek in this way to gather strength so that faith may grow and hope be increasingly brightened? If so, then it may be said that we are building up ourselves on our most holy faith. And we may be quite sure that those who are building up themselves will greatly value being built up by others, and be profited by their divinely given ministrations.

This exhortation as to building ourselves up, occurring in Jude, seems to be a loud voice to those who take the way of faith in these last evil days; for Jude traces the ruin of the Church from its commencement as God's corporate witness on earth to its going on to judgment without the smallest hope of reconstruction, or of general recovery. At the close, he addresses himself to such as are standing for God in this time of declension and failure, saying, "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith."

A people, true to the Lord in an evil time, are recognized and called to be diligent in building up themselves. Faith is not spoken of here, as at the beginning of the brief epistle, as "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," but as "your most holy faith." Yes, it is that divine revelation of truth which specially refers to us. It is your faith, and it is "most holy." It is not merely that we should be holding a set of principles or doctrines, but we should be taking into our hearts the ministry of the exceeding riches of divine grace, the actings of divine righteousness, and the almightiness of divine power. These are ours through the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to abide with us forever.

We are delivered from the authority of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and by the Spirit we are united to Him where He now is. A work has been wrought by Him who not only died for our sins, but died to sin. This has set us free forever from the guilt of sins, and also from the dominion of sin; it has delivered us from our old standing in Adam, and has brought us into a totally new position, making us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Now in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, are brought into favor in the Beloved, and are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ so that we are always before God in the cloudless favor, nearness, and acceptance of Christ.

Brought into relationship with the Father as His children, with Christ as members of His body, and with the Holy Spirit as His temple, our fellowship by the Spirit is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The nature of God being now revealed in light and love, we walk in the light as He is in the light, where His eternal redemption has brought us. Truly, we have received an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, and we shall reign in life with Christ!

So, is it any marvel that it is called "your most holy faith"? Can any blessing known on earth exceed this? Every step of our onward path has been considered and every possible contingency provided for in the accomplished work and present offices of Christ so that we can rejoice in hope of glory as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ and can wait for God's Son from heaven.

No doubt "the faith" is the common property of all believers. "The faith which was once delivered unto the saints" is not delivered to apostles, but to the saints for their common blessing. And it is our faith, that which more particularly concerns us and ministers to us; it is "your most holy faith"-the wonderful revelation of divine grace which could not have been made till Jesus came, declared the Father, accomplished redemption according to God's counsel and purpose and went back to the Father. In ascension as man glorified, He was made Head over all to the assembly which is His body and has sent down the Holy Spirit to form the assembly on earth. (1 Corinthians 12:13).

We are, then, to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, by meditation on the Word of God under the guidance and teaching of the Spirit, and we are to make it our own by mixing faith with this divine testimony. The oft-repeated question therefore with every believer should be: How much have I been occupied this day in building up myself? for "the inward man is renewed day by day."

No doubt such will be prayerful too. Hence it is added, "Praying in the Holy Ghost," for, they own the Spirit. Where there is reality, those who pray will be satisfied with nothing less than praying according to the leading and desires of the Holy Spirit which we know will always be according to the truth. And keeping ourselves in the love of God is indispensable; for all our peace and strength flows from the consciousness that we are objects of divine love, and while thus exercised, we can be looking for mercy till the Lord comes: "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Where there is the absence of building up ourselves, we must not be surprised if prayer declines, if the enjoyment of the love of God be little known, and if the expectation of our Lord's mercy becomes dim. It is easy to go on in a routine of outward order and thus have credit among Christians, but what is it all worth •if the Lord has not our hearts, and we are not building up ourselves on our most holy faith? How ready every believer must be in the contemplation, of these things to cry out, "Hold Thou me up, and, I shall be safe!"

Scarcely can we think of any who are building themselves up who can be careless as to obedience to the Word of God. How could it be, if we are going on with God? Have not conditional blessings been set before us in Scripture? For example, are not those who, because they are God's children, refuse to be yoked with unbelievers, separated from what is "unclean" for the truth's sake and look for the Father's care and blessing? But what of those who do not take this place of separation in obedience to His Word and are more or less "yoked" with those who they know are "unbelievers"? Is it not often manifest that they have not in their souls the joy of relationship with the Father; and instead of God's blessing, find many of their plans frustrated and their expectations never realized? They have hoped for the Father's blessing without walking in obedience to His will.

The same thing is true as regards the world. We are told, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Even a child of God will not have the enjoyment of this precious relationship with the Father if his heart goes after that which is contrary to His mind and loves that which is under His judgment; for Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world." But what about those who refuse to be "yoked" with unbelievers in marriage or in anything else and who come out from among them? Such consciously fall into their Father's arms and enter into this most dear relationship. They know that He receives them and they can taste and enjoy His blessing. They find those precious words fulfilled in their happy experience, "I will receive you, and

will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2
Corinthians 6:14-18.

Cheer Them on

One night a great fire broke out in a building which was thought by the gathering spectators to have been evacuated. As they stood watching the flames, they suddenly heard the frightened wails of a small child from the fifth-story window. Up went a ladder and a fireman was seen ascending to the spot. As he neared the second story, the flames burst furiously from the windows, and the crowd almost despaired of the child's rescue. The brave man faltered, until a comrade from below cried out, "Cheer!" Cheer after cheer arose from the crowd, and the fireman continued up the ladder with renewed courage. The child was rescued, thanks to the encouragement of those standing below.

If you cannot go into the harvest field to work day after day, you can cheer those on who are working there for the Master.

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."
Matthew 9:38.

Christ and His Yoke

Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

In this precious and well-known passage we have two points which are very distinct and yet intimately connected; namely, Christ and His yoke. We have, first, coming to Christ and its results; second, taking His yoke and its results. "Come unto Me,... and I will give you rest." "Take My yoke... and ye shall find rest." These things, being distinct, should never be confounded; and, being intimately connected, they should never be separated. To confound them is to dim the luster of divine grace; to separate them is to infringe upon the claims of divine holiness. Both these evils should be carefully guarded against.

There are many who hold up before the eye of the "heavy laden" sinner the yoke of Christ as something which he must "take on" ere his burdened heart can taste of that blessed rest which Christ gives to all who simply come unto Him just as they are. The passage before us does not teach this. It puts Christ first, and His yoke afterward. It does not hide Christ behind His yoke, but rather places Him in all His attractive grace before the heart as the One who can meet every need, remove every weight, hush every guilty fear, fill up every blank, satisfy every longing desire—in a word, One who is able to do as He says He will, even to give "rest." There are no conditions proposed, no demands made, no barriers erected. The simple, touching, winning word is, "Come." It is not, "Go"; "Do"; "Give"; "Bring"; "Feel"; "Realize." No; it is "Come." And how are we to "Come"? Just as we are. To whom are we to "Come"? To Jesus. When are we to "Come"? Now.

Observe then that we are to come just as we are. We are not to wait for the purpose of altering a single jot or tittle of our state, condition, or character. To do this would be to "come" to some alteration or improvement in ourselves, whereas Christ distinctly and emphatically says, "Come unto Me." Many souls err on this point. They think they must mend their ways, alter their course, or improve their moral condition ere they come to Christ; whereas in the point of fact, until they really do come to Christ they cannot amend or alter or improve anything. There is no warrant whatever for anyone to believe that he will be a single whit better an hour, a day, a month, or a year hence, than he is at this moment. And even were he better, he would not on that account be a whit more welcome to Christ than he is now. There is no such thing as an offer of salvation tomorrow. The word is, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 3:15. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2.

There is nothing more certain than that all who have ever tried the self-improvement plan have found it an utter failure. They have begun in darkness, continued in misery, and ended in despair. And yet, strange to say, in view of the numberless beacons which are ranged before us in terrible array to warn us of the folly and danger of traveling that road, we are sure at the first to adopt it. In some way or another self is looked to and wrought upon in order to procure a warrant to come to Christ. "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own

righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Romans 10:3. Nothing can possibly be a more dreary, depressing, hopeless task than "going about to establish their own righteousness." Indeed, the dreariness of the task must ever be commensurate with the earnestness and sincerity of the soul that undertakes it. Such a one will assuredly have sooner or later to give utterance to the cry, "O wretched man that I am!" and also to ask the question, "Who shall deliver me?" (Rom. 7:24). There can be no exception. All with whom the Spirit of God has ever wrought, have in one way or another been constrained to own the hopelessness of seeking to work out a righteousness for themselves.

The Lord Jesus does not say, "Come unto My yoke." No; but, "Come unto Me." We must cease from our own works in every shape and form, and come to Christ-come just as we are-come Now. We come to Christ and get rest from and in Him before ever we hear a word about the "yoke." To put the yoke first is to displace everything. If a "heavy laden" sinner thinks of the yoke, he must be overwhelmed by the thought of his own total inability to take it upon him or carry it. But when he comes to Jesus and enters into His precious rest, he finds the "yoke is easy," and the burden "light."

This conducts us to the second point in our subject; namely, the "yoke." It has been already observed that we must keep the two things distinct. To confound them is to tarnish the heavenly luster of the grace of Christ, and to put a yoke upon the sinner's neck, and a burden upon his shoulder which he, as being "without strength," is wholly unable to bear. But they are morally connected. All who come to Christ must take His yoke upon them and learn of Him if they would "find rest" unto their souls. To come to Christ is one thing; to walk with Him or learn of Him is quite another. Christ was "meek and lowly in heart." He could meet the most adverse and discouraging circumstances with an "even so, Father."

John the Baptist's heart might fail amid the heavy clouds which gathered around him in Herod's dungeon; the men of that generation might refuse the double testimony of righteousness and grace as furnished by the ministry of John and of our Lord Himself; Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum might refuse the testimony of His mighty works-a torrent of works which one might suppose would sweep away every opposing barrier.

All these things and many more might cross the path of the divine Workman; but, being "meek and lowly in heart," He could say, "I thank Thee, O Father,... even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." His "rest" in the Father's counsels was profound and perfect, and He invites us to take His yoke, to learn of Him, to drink into His Spirit, to know the practical results of a subject mind, that so we may "find rest" unto our souls. A broken will is the real ground of the rest which we are to "find" after we have come to Christ. If God wills one thing, and we will another, we cannot find rest in that. It matters not what the scene or circumstances may be. We may swell a list of things to any imaginable extent in which our will may run counter to the will of God; but, in whatever it is, we cannot find rest as long as our will is unbroken. We must get to the end of self in the matter of the will, or else we shall not find rest.

This, my beloved reader, is a deep, real, earnest, personal work. Moreover, it is a daily thing. It is a continual taking of Christ's yoke in order to come to Christ. No; but we come to Christ first, and then, when His love fills and satisfies our souls, when His rest refreshes our spirits, when we can gaze by faith upon His gracious countenance and see Him stooping down to confer upon us the

high and holy privilege of bearing His yoke and learning His lesson, we find that His yoke is indeed easy, and His burden is light. Unsubdued, unjudged, unmortified nature could never wear that yoke or bear that burden. The first thing is, "Come unto Me,... and I will give you rest."! The second thing is, "Take My yoke upon you,... and ye shall find rest."

Christian Mission and How to Fulfill It

It is indeed a trial of faith to find ourselves in the midst of evil which we have been taught to abhor. Nothing could be easier for God than to set everything right at once by His power, to put an end to all that disturbs our peace and gives us grief. But He does not do this, because He has something better in store for us. And faith has to learn to endure, in humiliation accepting the grievous situation, though it cause the utter crushing of what is dear to the heart. "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11.

A Clean Course

Our present path is a very simple one. There may be all sorts of evil here and there, and even God's people are so mixed up with it that we may not be able to say who are His and who are not. "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." But we have also a word to act upon the conscience: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." If you say, I know what I am in is unscriptural, and I am constantly involved in what is wrong, but I see nothing better; I answer that you must not go on with that: "depart from iniquity." We are told to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonor and that he who does, "shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Then, it may be urged, you will have to go alone, or lead in some new thing. But not so; I have to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." In these days, however, a great deal of patience also may be needed, as, indeed, Paul proceeds to remind Timothy in his day. Jeremiah was indignant at the state of things he saw around him; but he received the word, "If thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth" (chap. 15). So, at present, one might be provoked to abstain from having anything to do with persons in the sects, etc., but we have to remember that there are true saints of God in these associations whose good we are to seek for the Lord's sake. J.N.D.

The Clock Stopped

A little clock in a jeweler's window stopped one morning at twenty minutes after eight. It remained silent and inactive for half an hour.

School children, looking at the clock, stopped to play; people hurrying to the train began to walk more slowly; professional men lingered to chat with each other.

All were late because one small clock stopped. Never had these people known how much they depended upon that clock, until it led them astray.

Many are thus unconsciously depending upon the influence of Christians. You may think you have no influence; but if you are a Christian you cannot go wrong in one little act without leading others astray. "None of us liveth to himself." Rom. 14:7.

The Closet

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple." Matt. 24:1. For what was it now? A corpse and no more. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Matt. 23:38. "And His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

The hearts of the disciples then, as too often now, were occupied with the present appearances and the great show of grandeur in God's service;

the halo of associations was bright before their eyes. But Jesus passes sentence on all that even they admired on earth. In truth, when He left the temple, all was gone that gave it value in the sight of God. Outside Jesus, what is there in this world but vain show or worse? And how does the Lord deliver His own from the power of tradition and every other source of attraction for the heart? He opens out the communications of His own mind and casts the light of the future on the present.

How often worldliness unjudged in a Christian's heart betrays itself by a lack of appreciation for God's unfolding of what He is going to do! How can I enjoy the coming of the Lord if it is to throw down much that I am seeking to build up in the world? A man, for instance, may be trying to gain or keep a status by his ability, and hoping that his sons may outstrip himself by the superior advantages they enjoy. On some such idea is founded all human greatness; it is "the world" in fact. Christ's coming again is a truth which demolishes the whole fabric, because if we really look for His coming as that which may be from day to day-if we realize that we are set like servants at the door with the handle in hand waiting for Him to knock (we know not how soon), and desiring to open to Him immediately ("Blessed are those servants")-if such is our attitude-how can we have time or heart for that which occupies the busy Christ-forgetting world?

Moreover, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not; and as for means and agents to carry on its plans, the world will never be in lack of men to do its work. But we have a higher business, and it is beneath us to seek the honors of the world that rejects our Lord. Let our outward position be ever so menial or trying, what can be so glorious as in that position to serve our Lord Jesus Christ? And He is coming.

Contrasts: God's Principles and Man's Principles

Heb. 2:6-10

And now we turn our eyes to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and there we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor. Yes, the One whom Simeon looked upon, a lowly babe at His mother's breast, the One whom John saw crucified and dead upon a cross, we see now in the highest place in the glory. God has raised Him from the dead and set Him there. Every Christian heart thrills at the thought of His exaltation, and yet that glory that has received Him has not made Him more glorious. It was the only place in the universe that was worthy of Him. His disciples anticipated the throne of David for Him, and He shall have it in due time, with every other throne; but there was only one place that was worthy of Him when He came forth from among the dead, and that was the Father's throne on high. The diamond is put in a golden setting, but its setting does not increase the value of the gem; it is the only fit setting for it. So it is with Jesus, whose name is now above every name, and who is crowned in heaven with glory and honor; He is in His right setting there. God has said to Him, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." He is not inactive there, but having passed through all suffering, He is the fully qualified Captain or Leader of God's many sons. I should like to deepen the desire within us to follow Him, and to awaken and stir up a holy enthusiasm for Him in the hearts of those He has saved.

Psalm 110 is a remarkable psalm; it is quoted in the New Testament more often than any other. It begins, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool," plainly presenting the Lord as faith sees Him now crowned with glory and honor. The third verse of it is very beautiful; it describes what is yet to be seen in Israel when the Lord shall rule in Zion, but I want to give it a present application which I feel is wholly just, and for this purpose I will quote it as it is in the J.N. Darby translation. "Thy people shall be willing (or offer themselves willingly) in the day of Thy power, in holy splendor: from the womb of the morning shall come to Thee the dew of Thy youth." All His foes are to be subdued beneath His feet, and Israel, a newborn nation, shall surround their Messiah and King with loud hosannas, nevermore to grieve Him. That will be a splendid thing to behold, but there is a greater splendor, and it may be realized and seen now. This is the day of His rejection by men. He is not wanted by the world, but those who love Him may come to Him with wholehearted devotion. They may be filled with enthusiasm for Him; as a newborn race they may follow Him with steady steps and loins well girt; they may make their boast in the Lord. This, in the eyes of heaven, is "holy splendor," and nothing else than this can please our God.

We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, and it is as the victorious and crowned Savior that He is leading many sons to glory. Glory is our destiny, for we are following the One who is there. This is all real to men of faith, but not to those who walk by sight; and we must be on our guard against the glamor of "the things that are seen" which dims faith's keen vision, and often betrays the Christian into fearing men, or into admiring and following them. But the greatest of men can

offer us no destiny. Death is their master; it mocks at their promises, and shatters all their hopes and ambitions. Every day is a witness to this.

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, Await alike th' inevitable hour-

The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

There is no hope beyond the grave but in Christ. He has overthrown death, and destroyed him who had the power of it, which is the devil, that He might deliver those who through fear of it were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And in Him we have a hope that maketh not ashamed. He will not fail us, nor be untrue to God who has entrusted His sons to His care. He is not only a great leader, but He is "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God," and He ever liveth to make intercession for us. And that brings us to another side of His activities for us in the glory. If the road is rough and the trials great, and if the fight waxes fierce and we grow faint, "He has said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and knows how to sympathize with us and to succor us in our hours of need. He considers us and cares for us and provides the grace that we need, so that when we look to Him and come to His throne of grace, we find the help already prepared and waiting for us. Jesus is not only a glorious leader, but He is a sympathetic friend. His name is glorious, and His arm is omnipotent, but His heart is tender. He has won our admiration by His exploits, but He has won our hearts by His love.

4. His Coming Again

"We shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. That will be the climax of our joy and the consummation of all our hopes, when the stress and strain of our pilgrimage is over and the testing is complete. We shall meet Him in the air and look upon His face; we shall see Him as He is. Later, when He returns to the world, He will come as the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, to judge and make war, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. But we shall not wail because of Him, for though we, too, shall see the splendor of His majesty, we shall see Him and know Him as we have learned Him here. What He is to us now, He will be when we see Him. We shall not meet a stranger whom we fear, but a Savior and a friend whom we love; One who has been near to us in our sorrows and carried us through them, who is our daily resource and joy; as He is to us now, so shall we see Him then. What precious experiences have bound us to Him in this valley of weeping, what intimate links we have with Him, and these we never lose.

We shall see Him also as the One in whom the Father delights, the Object of the Father's love, and in this we shall have full communion with the Father. This will be the supreme joy of the Father's house, where the Father's beloved Son is honored and adored by all.

We are to appear with Him when He comes forth to reconcile all things to God, and when His glory shall shine to the uttermost bounds of the universe that He has created. We shall see Him then, just as blessedly \perfect as He was in the manger, and on the cross, and on His Father's throne, and every remembrance of Him and every fresh view of His glory will call 'forth fresh praise from our willing hearts and

He is a great \ and glorious Savior, and I wish that I could set Him forth in a worthier way, but this is at once my joy and my grief; my joy that I am able to speak of Him at all; my grief because my

words are so cold and dull when they ought to be words that would move you and thrill you and bring you in holy enthusiasm and full surrender to His feet. But a thousand times better than hearing of Him is to draw near and learn what He is for yourself, and that knowledge that you will gain of Him now, you will never lose. It will be your prized possession forever and ever.

The Cross

"The manifold wisdom of God." God has shown His wisdom in creation, in providence, and in His government of His earthly people. Now we find a totally new thing in the wisdom of God, namely, that there are those who are united to His Son in glory, the whole question of sin having been so entirely settled that God can now bring us into the very same glory which Christ has taken as man. This is something entirely new that is brought out here in Ephesians, concerning which there was perfect silence in the Old Testament scriptures.

Daily

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." Luke 9:23. "Daily"-this is the trial. A man might heroically do it once for all, and he would have plenty of people to honor him, and have books written about him; but it is very difficult to go on every day denying oneself, and no one knowing anything about it. It comes to this that, if you spare the flesh in this life, you will lose your life in the next; and what if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul: what would a man give in exchange for his soul? It is not a question of bringing life down to the flesh; but if you lose your life here, you will get it elsewhere, above and beyond this world: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." It is either giving up the world for eternal life, or else it is eternal misery; that is the real question. "What is a man advantaged?" You must give it up; you cannot keep it.

The Deceitfulness of Sin: a Lesson From Gehazi

Among the many instances of divine grace and illustrations of the gospel contained in the Old Testament, there are few more attractive than the story of Naaman (2 Kings 5).

It is wonderful to trace God's grace toward that honorable but afflicted man: from the message of his wife's little maid to the moment when, in obedience to the word of Elisha, he dipped himself seven times in Jordan's stream, obtaining the cure he so ardently desired. Prior to that cure was the necessary moment of humiliation when Naaman's own servants reasoned against him. But "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" is the golden rule for God's dealings with a soul, and the Lord Jesus Himself set the perfect example. In becoming the Savior of sinners, He humbled Himself (Phil. 2:8) by bearing the penalty of death which the sinner deserved; and now God "giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5), that is, to whosoever will acknowledge his own guilty place and sinful nature. To such, the interpreter can say on God's part, "I have found a ransom" (Job 33:24); "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's" (v. 25).

But alongside this happy picture of deliverance and blessing, God has placed a most solemn example of divine warning and displeasure. The gospel is preached to those that are afar off (the Gentiles), and to them that were nigh (the Jews) (Eph. 2:17). The divine message given to the entire sphere of professing Christendom has been "toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shall be cut off." Romans 11:22.

Gehazi, the servant of God's prophet, had a position of privilege which was unique in that day. Associated with the man who had the divine testimony in Israel, he had a share in raising the Shunammite's son from the dead, as well as in the multiplication of the loaves and corn for the people (2 Kings 4). He was also with the prophet at the time the healing message was brought to Naaman—perhaps he was actually the messenger himself. But vanity and the love of money, a root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10), led him to falsify the grace of the God of Israel expressed to this stranger. Thus the prophet had the melancholy experience of seeing the fresh springs of joy and healing in Naaman's heart attacked by Gehazi's covetous actions. However, faith in God would dictate that He who had begun a good work in the Syrian captain would complete it. Were it not for this, we might well feel saddened that one who had so recently learned that blessing from God was "without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1) should have had his heart chilled by the reversal of the prophet's message.

Gehazi, being bent upon gain, became blind to every other consideration. But there is one thing most striking about the narrative: the moment his object was achieved, he had the conscience of a thief, and bestowed his silver and garments in the "house" (2 Kings 5:24). The attractiveness of sin is lost as soon as it is committed. "Ye shall be as gods" seemed so alluring to Adam and Eve, but the moment they sinned, they learned their own nakedness.

Who would envy Gehazi his success obtained by lying and deceit? Hardened by unbelief and deceived by Satan, he comes and stands again before his master. He meets the prophet's

searching question with a lie, but he has to learn that neither God nor the prophet was deceived, though he had been, and that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6:7. He had desired Naaman's money and apparel; he received also his leprosy. He is numbered with the company of the "many lepers... in Israel" (Luke 4:27), but with him is the added judgment that it should cleave to him and to his seed forever-a suggestion of the endless doom that awaits those who neglect, refuse, or corrupt the grace of God expressed in the gospel. We next meet him, a sycophant in the king's presence (and such a king!-see 2 Kings 8:4), and there he passes from the scene, a hopeless leper, apparently striving to stifle the accusing of a bad conscience with the pleasures of the world.

What a warning and a lesson for us! If we, who have been brought into such a place of privilege, draw near to God with our lips only, though our hearts be far from Him (Matt. 15:8), how then shall we stand before a greater than Elisha "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ"? (Rom. 2:16) It will be only to hear that awful word, "Depart" (Matt. 7:21-23). To any such we would urge, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:15.

Deliverance

The doctrine of the believer's being dead to the law, and his being married to another who has been raised up from among the dead, as the only source of fruit-bearing, is set forth in the first six verses of chapter 7. Afterward, we have a case supposed of the experience of a quickened soul under law struggling for deliverance. This deliverance is stated by one who has been delivered. Practice follows deliverance.

The person supposed to be speaking here has life, for,

He knows that "the law is spiritual," that is, not merely applicable to outward conduct but to the inward feelings and desires, and he knows that he is fleshly, sold under sin-the slave of sin.

He declares that the law is good and resolves to be good and to do good, but cannot.

3) He delights in the law after the inward man and says the commandment is holy, just, and good. He consents to the law that it is good because his understanding is changed, because his will is changed (to will is present with him for good), and because he has a heart now according to God, for he delights in the law of God according to the inward man. This reveals his state, and that he is born of God; but the context shows that he is occupied neither with Christ nor with the Holy Ghost, but with self.

But though he has life, he is really under the law, and, through his struggling with the law, learns,

That in him (his flesh) no good dwells (v. 18).

That sin dwells in him (v. 20).

3) That he has no power to perform that which is good, so that he is brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. He finds that he is powerless to overcome indwelling evil by efforts of law-keeping. These are three profitable lessons, often learned though deep distress and humiliation of spirit. And having found out by experience, though painfully, that sin dwells in him, that his whole Adam nature is sinful with no good in it, and that he has no power over it, he is truly "wretched" and cries out for a deliverer to bring him out of it: "Who shall deliver me?" Then, he finds that God has already done this for him through Jesus Christ our Lord, and, believing this, he thanks God. He now has soul-deliverance and waits for the deliverance of his body, for God's purpose is that we shall "be conformed to the image of His Son." He may have received forgiveness of sins before, but now he finds he is delivered from sin and the law by the death of Christ, and from that time he has a new experience. No doubt, among many other profitable lessons, such learn that experience never gives peace with God, but that faith in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ always does.

In Romans 3 through 7 God is the Justifier of the ungodly, the Reconciler of His enemy-man-and the Deliverer from sin. The law, instead of justifying, condemned; instead of reconciling, gave the knowledge of sin; and instead of delivering, showed him guilty and under the curse. Yet the law is

"holy," because, instead of excusing sin it exposes sin; the law is "just," because it judges even the motions of sin as well as sins committed; and the law is "good," if a man use it lawfully. Our sins are forgiven on the ground of Christ having died for us, but we are delivered from that evil principle in us (sin) by death, for Christ having "died unto sin once," we have died with Him, and are now alive unto God in Him who is alive again, and that for evermore.

As to his experience, now,

His eye is off self and the law. He looks to God in Christ, and becomes occupied with all that divine grace has accomplished for him in that work. Before he knew deliverance, it was self occupation-"I" and "me", but now he is before God, thanking Him for what He has done through our Lord Jesus Christ. This produces an amazing change in the state of soul.

He has God's thoughts instead of his own about himself. He now knows that he has two natures of very opposite qualities-"that which is born of the flesh" and "that which is born of the Spirit." The former he sees as having been judged by God on the cross; the latter he knows is a new creation in Christ in which God always views him. He is aware that both these natures are unchanging in their moral qualities for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" and "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Both these natures are in the believer; the one acts on what is "only evil," the other on what is for the glory of God. In looking at himself now, he takes sides with God, and, recognizing these two natures, he concludes, "So then with the mind (or new nature) I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh (or old nature) the law of sin." v. 25.

3) He is done with himself as to having any standing in the flesh before God, and as to confidence in it, for God has given him a new state and has put him on entirely different ground before Himself. Not only is he forgiven, but God has delivered him from his old fleshly state, and given him a new place before Himself. He is no longer in Adam, but in Christ Jesus; not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwells in him. This is a real deliverance, and, believing God's testimony concerning it, we have, by the Spirit, the comfort and power of it for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (chap. 8:1). Now what a wide contrast there is as to state and standing, and what comfort and rest the soul has that simply receives God's testimony!

4) He has power over sin. If he thinks of the sin in the flesh, he remembers that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. It is gone forever to faith under the judgment of God. If he considers that in his flesh no good dwells, he knows that his standing before God is not now in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. And instead of being helpless as to sin and its captivity, he finds he has power to walk in the light, as God is in the light, to resist the devil, and to overcome the world. He knows that by the gift of the Holy Spirit he is connected with a triumphant Christ. He is conscious of being set free, and that SIN is no longer his master, and looking up he can say that "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." v. 2. Thus, having a new nature and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the two great requirements of the law are fulfilled in him-love to God, and love to man, though he is not under law, and he walks "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1-4.)

In the scriptures we have thus far looked at, it may be well to observe that there are four laws brought before us:

"The law of God," the demands of which even a quickened soul finds himself powerless to answer. (chap. 7:22).

"The law of my mind," the resolution of a quickened soul to obey God (v. 23).

"The law of sin and death," the principle of enmity and antagonism of the natural man to God, of insubjection to His will (chap 8.2) As another has said, "that deadly principle which ruled in us before as alive in the flesh."

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the principle and power of that new life given us in Christ by the Holy Spirit who now dwells in us. (chap. 8:2).

The soul thus brought into liberty, or set free by divine grace is delivered in three ways:

By death. Our old man is crucified with Christ, for God condemned "sin in the flesh" in the death of His own spotless and well-beloved Son. We have thus "died unto sin," have died with Christ, and we are clear from the law having died to that in which we were held, for can a dead man have lusts or sin?

As "not under law, but under grace," sin shall not have dominion over us. We are now "in Christ Jesus," brought into the full and abiding favor of God. Faith knows no other position. Will this lead us to sin? Shall we not rather have our fruit unto holiness? (Rom. 6).

3) The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus brings us into a new order of things-new life, new position and state. Will then this new life and power in the Holy Spirit lead us to sin, or shall we be thus strengthened to resist the devil and to abstain from all evil?

We are set free then,

As to conscience, by the death of Christ, in whom God condemned "sin in the flesh."

As to state and position, as not in the flesh, but in Christ with the Spirit dwelling in us, and not under law, but under grace.

3) As to experience, sin no longer having dominion over us, but having love in our hearts to God and man, and power by the Spirit to overcome, we find the mind of the Spirit to be life and peace.

4) As to practice, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

What a deliverance! What praise and worship it calls forth! What never-ending cause of thanksgiving to God! Surely we may say to the disconsolate believer-

"Look off unto Jesus, and sorrow no more." The comfort of this deliverance we have "in believing." Our power for the enjoyment of it, and for life and godliness, is the Holy Spirit. We are told that if we are led of the Spirit we are not under law, if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Before deliverance it was all "I," "me," and "my," but after deliverance, CHRIST becomes the Object of faith, and the Holy Spirit the power for holiness. We can therefore do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.

As to the Spirit, we may observe that-

He gives us "life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2).

He dwells in us as a divine Person-the Spirit that raised up Jesus from among the dead, and shall "quicken your mortal bodies." The Holy Spirit Himself dwells in our bodies (v. 11).

He is our power to "mortify the deeds of the body." Observe, it does not say "the body," but, "the deeds of the body" (v. 13).

He is "the Spirit of adoption," to make us know we are God's children. He forms affections and thoughts in us suited to such a relationship and leads us, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (v. 15).

5) He is the Helper of our infirmities in prayer, and makes intercession for us (v. 26).

6) He teaches us to wait for the redemption of our body (v. 23).

Thus we have brought before us something of the power that works in a delivered soul. Ought we not then to "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"?

In the old-creation line of things, we have sin, flesh, death, sufferings, groanings, and infirmities, often struggling under law. In the new creation we have deliverance from sin, life in the Spirit, thanksgiving and peace. We are in Christ and the Spirit is in us-all things working together for our good. We are more than conquerors through every trouble. We "are not under the law, but under grace," having no condemnation and knowing no separation.

Although so blessedly delivered and walking in the Spirit, we can never forget that the flesh is in us. The flesh, however, is not us, for we are in Christ, and are not in the flesh before God. Yet we should never lose the sense that in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. We know what the conflict between the two natures is, and find our communion with the Father interrupted the moment we trust the flesh, and walk in it.

Besides this, the delivered soul groans:

As having a mortal body; for "we that are in this tabernacle do groan." "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"-our glorified body. He knows that he has a "mortal body," liable to disease and pain. (2 Cor. 5; Rom. 8:11).

With groanings within. "Ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Rom. 8:23. This is more than suffering in our bodies, for, having the Spirit, the affections and thoughts are according to Christ, the suffering and rejected One, who is coming, not only for the redemption of our body, but to bring even this groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

3) With unutterable groanings in prayer, for "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

How many groans the Lord Jesus will hush when He comes again! How blessed is the thought that when Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, we also shall be manifested with Him in glory! (Col. 3:4). Meanwhile, may our hearts be taken up with Him, may we stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has made us free, and may we rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved: Part 1

Every true believer loves the Lord. Peter, speaking to believers about the Lord, can say, "Whom having not seen, ye love." In the presence of the proud Pharisee, the Lord can say of the woman who kissed His feet, "She loved much." Thus Scripture recognizes this love, and the Lord delights in it. Moreover, love to the Lord carries with it the promise of many blessings, not the least being the special realization of the presence of the Lord and of the Father (John 14:21-24).

Yet Scripture recognizes the varied measures of love for the Lord found among His disciples on different occasions. The love of Mary of Bethany, who anointed the Lord with the "very precious ointment," was surely greater than that of the indignant disciples who said, "To what purpose is this waste?" The love of Mary of Magdala, who "stood without at the sepulcher weeping," exceeded on that occasion the love of the disciples who "went away again unto their own home."

Moreover, our love may wax and wane. Under pressure, the love of many may "wax cold." In the presence of the allurements of the world, this love may dim, as in the case of a believer of whom the Apostle Paul could say, he "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Yet, while love to the Lord is very precious in His sight, and is to be cherished and desired by the believer, it is clear we cannot trust in a love that is so liable to change. The love that we alone can rest in must be the love that knows no change—the love that abides—the love of Christ for His own.

"Our souls through many changes go; His love no change can ever know."

It is the realization and enjoyment of the love of Christ that awakens our love to Him. "We love Him," says the Apostle, "because He first loved us." Hence our love to Christ will be according to the measure in which we realize His love to us. If we then would love the Lord with more singleness of heart, let us not turn in upon our own hearts and think of our love to Him, but let us seek to delight our souls in His love to us.

The effect of a soul thus delighting itself in the love of Christ is blessedly illustrated by the Apostle John in the closing scenes of the Lord's life. In contrast, the same scenes depict the sorrowful effects of confidence in our love to the Lord, as in the case of the Apostle Peter. Both disciples loved the Lord with a true and deep affection beyond that of most, for it led them to leave all and follow Him. One disciple, however, trusted in his love to the Lord, while the other rested in the Lord's love to him. This is the outstanding difference between these two men, so often found in close association in these last scenes.

When the Lord, in His wonderful grace, washes the disciples' feet, Peter can ask, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" And when he learns that without the feet-washing there can be no part with Christ, immediately he exclaims with a glow of ardent love, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." A little later, with genuine love to the Lord, he can say, "I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death"; and again, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Then at the betrayal scene, Peter, in his ardent love for the Lord, drew his

sword in defense of his Master. Thus, both by words and deeds, he seems to say, "I am the man that loves the Lord." In contrast to Peter, the Apostle John says, as it were, "I am the man that the Lord loves"; for indeed he describes himself five times in these last scenes as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It is wonderful that His love should have so wrought with us that we should love Him, but far more beautiful that He should love us in the first place. John delighted in this wonderful love, and it was on this boundless love which he rested.

Disorder in the Land

I was much struck in reading Luke 3 this morning. There was the Lord's land, with the rightful heir to it lying in a manger, while it was parceled out among the Gentiles, and an anomalous condition existed in the religious polity of Israel—two high priests. Then a voice breaks in on this state of things, but it is not the rams' horn trumpets of Joshua's day, claiming the land for the Lord. That would not have been confessing the ruined condition and the sins of Israel. John is not driving back Jordan to prepare the way of the Lord, but calling a people down here to confess their sins. It is taking the true place of utter failure before the Lord, and Jesus joins this remnant. He can attach Himself in grace to such, and, when taking that position, was sealed by the Holy Ghost, and owned by the Father's voice. How good it is to be in the secret of the Lord! In later days He will write the name of His God, and of the city of His God, and His own new name on the lowly remnant who hold fast His word and do not deny His name.

Do Angels Sing?

When the Lamb comes out (Rev. 5), the elders sing (not "sung") a new song. Notice that the angels never sing. People make them sing, but they never do in Scripture. Angels shout and cry, but there is only one note found with them. Man has all kinds of infirmities, but he can be tuned; it takes such as man to be tuned. The angels shout and praise, and that is lovely. And they stand. And at the tomb, two angels sat. But these elders sing a new song.

The End of Christendom

May God give us to see and mark the course which this world is running, and enable us to avoid all its influences. When one knows what will be the end of a thing, one avoids that which would lead to it. The end of Christendom is awful. God makes us acquainted with it in order that we may avoid it. The more I see what is taking place, the more I discover that things are hastening on that evil may have the upper hand and be judged, that God may judge it and purify the earth. The iniquity must be full before God strikes. We are in the last days, in this respect. Men believe there is great progress taking place, yet they feel great uneasiness in the expectation of what is going to happen. Christians must keep apart, living according to the principles of their divine calling.

The Energy of Faith

We may receive a benefit from a person, and be assured of a hearty welcome to it, and yet feel ourselves ill at ease in his presence. Nothing is more common than this. Gratitude is awakened in the heart very deeply, and yet reserve and uneasiness are felt. It calls for something beyond our assurance of his good will, and of our full welcome to his service, to make us at ease in the presence of a benefactor. And this something, I believe, is the discovery that we have an interest in himself as well as in his ability to serve us.

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

In the Song of Solomon we find that it is the love which warrants personal intimacy (after the manner of the nearest and dearest relationships) that breathes in this lovely little book. The age of the union has not yet arrived. But it is the time of the betrothment, and we are His delight. It was so before the worlds were. As another has said, "In the glass of His eternal decrees, the Father showed the Church to Christ, and Christ was so ravished with the sight that He gave up all for her."

Do we believe this? Does it make us happy? We are naturally suspicious of any offers to make us happy in God. Because our moral sense, our natural conscience tells of our having lost all right even to His ordinary blessings. The mere moral sense, therefore, will be quick to stand against it, and question all overtures of peace from heaven, and be ready to challenge their reality. But here comes the vigor of the spiritual mind, or the energy of faith. Faith gainsays these conclusions of nature. And in the revelation of God faith reads our abundant title to be near Him, and be happy with Him, though natural conscience and our sense of the fitness of things, would have it otherwise. Faith feels where the moral sensibilities of the natural mind would count it presuming even to tread.

Enoch's Translation

There are two distinct principles on which God deals with man as such, and on which also He deals with His people. These two principles are grace and government. The former is the blessed characteristic of God; He is the "God of all grace." The gospel is the great setting forth of this principle, as the Church in glory will be the eternal witness of it. God takes up a person and blesses him absolutely, without any reference to how he has behaved, or what he deserves. That this might be done consistently with the claims of righteousness against the sinner, the cross was necessary. "Grace reign(s) through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Government, on the other hand, is the reverse of this. It is cognizant of the behavior of the person under it, and regulates its conduct toward him by his merits. The principle of government we get in those words in 1 Pet. 2:14, "Governors... are... for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." This word applies to human government, but the principle is the same whatever the sphere in which government is exercised.

God judges as Almighty Governor of all, and judgment goes upon the ground of man's behavior. Thus in the final judgment we read, "They were judged every man according to their works."

Now these two principles of grace and government find an exhibition in the family of God, and it is most important for us to remember that God acts toward us as His people on both these principles. If I forget His grace when I have failed, I might get into despair. If I forget His government, I might grow careless, not remembering that "if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die" (Rom. 8:13; J.N.D. Trans.), and our reaping depends upon our sowing.

I wish to refer to an example of God's acting on these two principles in the history of Abram. In the first place, of course, the call that made Abram a saint was sovereign grace. He was born among idolaters and was the object of God's electing favor just as distinctly as the chief of sinners. And the same is true of every saint of God. Salvation is all of grace. "Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." But now that God had brought him to Himself, he came into the place where government as well as grace would be exercised toward him; and it is the same thing with ourselves when brought to God.

Abram had not been long in the place of favor before, under the severe pressure of circumstances, he gave up acting on the principle of faith, on which alone we can please God, and adopted the world's principle of sight. He had gone to Canaan in faith, in obedience to the divine word. There he met with a famine and without consulting God he did what prudence would suggest, and what every man of the world would well understand—he left the land of famine for Egypt, the land of supply.

Now Egypt and Canaan respectively represent the two principles of sight and faith. God as Creator made them to picture these two principles for us. Egypt is a country that draws its resources from itself. It has a river that supplies it, as it were, independently of heaven. Canaan, on the other hand, was watered from above. It would have perished unless remembered in heaven, as Israel

would have done in the wilderness had Jehovah forgotten to supply them. The physical characteristics of the countries are contrasted in Deut. 11 Thus when Abram went down from Canaan to Egypt, his action was symbolic of what his heart was really doing. He was going from faith to sight-from being a man of faith, to become a man of the world.

Now we must notice that Abram got what he sought. And as a rule it is so with people. If they seek money, they get it; or praise of men, they get it; or an improved worldly position, they get it. "Verily they have their reward," as the Lord said. For when Abram came back from Egypt, we find both himself and his companion Lot in flourishing circumstances (Gen. 13:2, 5). Another thing to be remarked is that the moment Abram was on the path of sight, away in spirit from God, he renewed an untruthful compact with his wife Sarai, which is suggested by the principle of human prudence. "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister" (Gen. 12:13).

This does not save him from trouble, but God delivers him. "He reproveth kings for their sakes." This is pure grace. But the grace of God is more conspicuously shown in chapter 13. For God brought him not merely out of Egypt, but to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning. And there, at the place of the altar that he had made at first, he called on the name of Jehovah. This is grace like that of which we read in Hosea, "She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." Grace reinstates the soul in its original brightness.

But now we must notice God's governmental ways, as I believe them to be, with Abram in connection with this turning aside. Although his own soul was restored to God, and the principle of sight, or the world, was judged in his heart, as we see beautifully displayed at the end of this chapter, where he gave up all the land to Lot, yet the mark of Egypt appeared in his family when it no longer is seen in himself. Abram was a man of faith. He had come up out of Egypt without any love for Egypt, but not so his nephew Lot, whom he had taken into Egypt with him. This we see in the end of Gen. 13

There was one strip of the land of Canaan that was like Egypt. A lovely country that was like the garden of the Lord, well watered everywhere, not by the rain of heaven, but by a river "like the land of Egypt." Lot had a taste for a land like Egypt, a land that Abram had taken him to see. It was a place where a man might live without dependence upon heaven. What an attractive place for our hearts naturally! Abram could give it up, but not so Lot. Still one thinks that it must have been a bitter day for Abram when he saw Lot taking the path of sight which he, alas! had once shown him. The principle that on one occasion marked the uncle, permanently marked the nephew.

They parted, Lot adopting worldly or Egyptian principles, and Abram walking still before God; the one sowing trouble for himself because of God's government, the other treading the path, though trying to the flesh, yet of which it is written, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." May the Lord help us to walk in them!

Now was this, we may ask, the end of Egyptian principles in Abram's family? Alas, no. The next person to whom they appear is Sarai, and here Abram himself falls under them. There was in Abram's family a handmaid of Sarai, an Egyptian. That word Egyptian carries the mind back to that journey of Abram's into Egypt. And we see that the principle that governs Sarai's mind now is the same that governed Abram's mind then. She gave her maid to be her husband's wife. It was an act

that seemed the only way out of a difficulty. There was no thought of God in it. The result was long trouble again under God's government. It was fifteen years before the result of this act was put out of Abraham's house, in the casting out of the bondwoman and her son. And then it was with a broken heart to Abraham. And it was not until this point that the last trace of that turning aside into Egypt disappears from his house.

Now all this is not the tale of God's grace, but it is an illustration of His government. If Abram relieves himself by giving up divine principles, we find two results. In the first place, the blessed power of God restores the soul; and in the second, the government of God gives him to taste the bitterness of those principles on which he has acted, when they appear in other members of his family.

It is one thing to go into the world, and quite another to get the worldliness out of the household when once we have got it in. Still, the discipline of God is not in anger, but it is that of a father, in order that we might be partakers of His holiness. "Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" It needs much grace to sustain the spirit in passing through the governmental consequences of our actions. Yet it is here that grace is occasionally displayed in the brightest way, as we see in David's history (2 Sam. 15 and 17) and which is illustrated by what we have in Peter-humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time (1 Pet. 5:6).

False Prayer and Self-Will

We will now turn to the gospels to present the chief characteristics of each. In doing this we must leave the reader to examine the details for his own profit, begging him to notice that the designed differences in the gospels are not only in the broad outlines, but also in the minutest details.

MATTHEW

The first verse gives us the key to Matthew's gospel. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It does not say "Son of man," or "Son of God," but "Jesus Christ, the son of David" and the genealogy is traced up to David, and thence to Abraham. We thus learn that in this gospel Christ is presented as THE SON OF DAVID; in other words, THE MESSIAH. The promise to Israel was, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isa. 7:14. In Matthew (but in no other gospel) is this said to be fulfilled in the birth of Christ (Matt. 1:23). As Messiah He was of course presented to the Jews, and this gospel relates how He was in various ways presented to the nation, and alas! His rejection at every step. Indeed the gospel may be said to be a living manifestation of that one short sentence, "He came unto His own (as the promised Messiah), and His own received Him not." Note too that it was in the midst of this rejection that He speaks of the Church: "I will build My church" (chap. 16:18; and it is mentioned also in chap. 18:17). This is the more remarkable as

Christian Truth (1981) vol. 34 p 130

FOR THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH 131

in none of the other gospels is the Church, as such, ever mentioned. Here the mention of the church is beautifully in character with the rejection of Christ by the Jews, though even in Matthew it is not fully brought out as it is afterward by Paul.

Notice too that Christ as the seed of David was to abide continually. "I have sworn unto David My servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." Psalm 89:3, 4. And so Matthew's gospel does not record the ascension, but closes with Christ still alive on the earth.

The one fact alone that Matthew does not mention the ascension should open the eyes of Christians to the truth that God had a special design in each gospel. Matthew, of course, was present at the ascension and knew all about it, and yet he omits this very important circumstance. Why? It would not have been in character with his gospel.

Being the presentation of Christ to the Jews, we have in this gospel, as we might expect, more quotations from the Old Testament scriptures than in the other gospels; quotations with which the Jews would be familiar. Here too we have the principles of the kingdom more fully brought out than in the other gospels.

Notice that on Christ's public entry into Jerusalem the cry in this gospel is, "Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." Chap. 21:9. This incident is related by the other three evangelists, but none of them mentions these words, "Son of David." It is only in Matthew that this title occurs, and it is only in Matthew that this title is said to stir up the anger of the Jews: "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased." v. 15. Surely this is not an accident, but at once will be seen to be in beautiful harmony with the distinctive character of the gospel.

The careful student will find many instances of words and sentences and incidents peculiar to Matthew, all of which are in full harmony with the character of the gospel, but which are presented differently in the other gospels, or are omitted altogether.

While speaking of Matthew's gospel in this way, we do not intend to convey the thought that Christ is never mentioned or alluded to in other characters also. The mention of other characters does not invalidate the truth that the Holy Ghost had a special design to manifest Christ in Matthew as the Son of David-the Messiah. The more Matthew is examined and compared with the other gospels, the more the special design of Matthew will be apparent and convincing. But we must turn to the next gospel.

MARK

Mark's gospel opens with these words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." It might be supposed that this is the key to the gospel, but it is not so. In Mark, Christ is presented as THE FAITHFUL SERVANT. This may not be seen at first glance, but it is well seen when Mark is carefully studied.

Notice that in Mark there is no genealogy, no birth of Christ, no parentage; for it is not usual to want to know the pedigree of servants (with reverence be it said of One who is our Lord). Again, masters say to their servants, "Immediately you have done so-and-so, I want you," or "Come immediately," or "Do this at once," and so on. So in this gospel we find the words "immediately" and "straightway" more often than in any of the other gospels. There is more reference in Mark to the service of the disciples than in Matthew, but above all it exhibits Christ as the faithful servant. Notice how He, immediately after finishing one work, proceeds to do another. See, too, how Christ in this gospel allows Himself to be intruded upon. In Mark alone we read, "And they had no leisure so much as to eat." Mark 6:31.

As we might expect, in Mark we have the nearest approach to chronological order; much, however, has been omitted that is in the other gospels.

In Mark we do not find Christ laying down the principles of the kingdom as in Matthew. They would be out of place in Mark's gospel. Nor do we meet with His judgment on the people in the words, "Woe unto you," so often repeated in Matthew. In this gospel alone are the words, "neither the Son," added in the passage, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Chap. 13:32. The mention of Christ's power to call twelve legions of angels is also omitted here, and in the closing commission the words, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," are omitted.

Notice, too, that in this gospel Christ does not address God as "Father" but once, and this is in the agony in the garden, when His service of love is closed. It is remarkable that in this gospel His disciples never address Him as "Lord."

The reader will not fail to see how all this is beautifully in harmony with the character of Christ as the faithful servant, which is brought out in Mark's gospel.

LUKE

In Luke's gospel, Christ is presented as THE SON OF MAN. Luke's genealogy traces back not merely to David and Abraham, as in Matthew, but to the first man Adam. Here we get the birth of Christ, and here exclusively we have the few incidents of His early life. He was subject to His parents, and He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. All this is surely in full harmony with Christ as Son of man.

This gospel takes a wider scope than Matthew- it is the Son of man presented to men. Doubtless it is to the Jews first, but afterward it is to the whole world. This is brought out in many of the details. Notice, for instance, the quotation (chap. 3:4) from Isa. 40, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." Matthew quotes this passage (chap. 3:3), and stops here, but Luke continues the quotation: "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." This is remarkable because Luke quotes less from the Old Testament than Matthew; but here he quotes more, and there is divine wisdom in it. Doubtless the reader will see how it was in full harmony for Matthew to stop where he did in the quotation, and equally so for Luke to quote more. In Luke it is "all flesh" which is to see the salvation of the Lord. In like manner, when the twelve apostles are sent forth to preach, they are not charged (as they are in Matthew): "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." Here, too, we have the wider commission to the seventy (chap. 10:1).

In Luke, and only Luke, we get the great moral lesson of the good Samaritan, showing that all men are our neighbors. Here alone we get, in answer to the objection that "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (chap. 15), the beautiful parable of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son, exhibiting God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, engaged in the salvation of men. Here alone we get the divine insight into the future world, in the account of Lazarus and the rich man, with its fine lesson that outward blessing is no longer a sign of God's richest favor and its memorable declaration that if men hear not the means that God has appointed, neither will they hear though one rose from the dead. Here alone we get the beautiful story of the Pharisee and the publican. The reader will surely not fail to see how all these points show the setting aside of the Jewish system, and Christ revealing Himself as for man universally-the Son of man for man. This is the characteristic of Luke's gospel.

Feet Washing

The action of the Lord in the 13th of John, where at the conclusion of the supper He washes the disciples' feet, is very precious and significant. To the opened eye of faith it sets Jesus before the heart in the present activities of His love for His own. That which Peter at the moment did not comprehend, but which he was told he would know "hereafter," we do understand by the power and teaching of the Holy Spirit. As we enter consciously into the grace of Christ, of which this scripture speaks, we enjoy our present position as those who are His own in this world.

Let us by the Spirit's aid follow this action of the Lord in the simple and touching way in which it unfolds itself before our eyes as John narrates it.

The hour was come for Jesus to "depart out of this world unto the Father." The work which the Father had given Him to do on earth was, in the spirit of His mind, accomplished. The cross was passed. The touching memorial of that love which is stronger than death, and which many waters cannot quench, had just been partaken of by the disciples. The betrayer was about to consummate his dark and dreadful work, and with it would close all connection of Jesus with men upon the footing on which He then stood. Those He so loved, He would have to leave behind Him in the world. He had loved them while in the world Himself, and they, though yet in the world, would still be the objects of His love. "He loved them unto the end." Through all time and through everything they would be loved. He must be separated from them in person for a time, but His love would ever be theirs.

The heart of Jesus felt this as He looked upon His disciples while they sat around Him at the passover. Not only did He feel how He loved them, but He also knew that all their blessing depended on Himself. He knew that "the Father had given all things into His hands."

The work of their redemption had been given to Him by the Father, and He had done it - done it infinitely well. The labor of His love for them in this was soon to be completed. The supper was the witness of it. But this was only part of the things given into His hands-another part remained. "He was come from God, and went to God." He must bring them to God also, bring them into that fellowship and glory into which He was Himself about to enter.

Such were the deep and mighty thoughts of love and divine purpose that filled the heart of Jesus as He looked upon His own. But how could He, when they could no longer see and hear Him, make them understand what His love would still do for them? How could He make them feel that He was still their own, and that all their blessing hung upon Himself in the activities of a love that could never change?

He had just set before them the abiding memorial of His dying love. Whenever they saw that broken bread and poured-out wine, His words, "This is My body which is given for you," and "This...is...My blood, which is shed for you," would come shortly to their ears, and make them think of that love; but how should He in figure set His living love before them by an abiding presentation of it? How should He make them realize their association with Himself in the place He was about

to take for them? "He riseth up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."

What a sight for their wondering eyes! They saw the Lord whose power they had witnessed so often, whose glory they had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the One whom they knew to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God," stoop to the lowest of menial service, and wash their soiled feet. Well might Peter call out as the Savior knelt to wash his feet, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" Peter loved his Lord, but he knew little of the mystery of that love which from the height of divine and heavenly glory had come down to serve him. Little did he know the need he had of all that love had done and would yet do for him and how low that love would have to stoop and how constant the service of that love would have to be.

The Lord tells him this: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." But this was not enough for that ardent heart; and, still ignorant, he saw nothing in his Lord's action but that which was degrading to Him, and he could not submit to that in his own person. Therefore he exclaims, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." He did not feel or know the necessity for that humiliation and so he deprecates it as he had done once before (with reference to the cross of which the bread and wine speak). Those hasty words of Peter's called forth that solemn rebuke from the Savior, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." There, as it were, Peter would have stood between the Lord and the work that would glorify God and save sinners; in this Peter was Satan's tool. It was more than ignorance, and hence the severity of that rebuke. Here Peter, through mistaken zeal for the Lord's own honor, would have stood between the Lord and his own blessing, so the Lord merely tells him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," that is, he would not enjoy communion with Christ in the heavenly blessedness in which He was about to enter.

Only by the exercise of love, as the washing of their feet was meant to illustrate, could Jesus have His own, while in the world, enjoy fellowship with Himself in heaven. From the glory Jesus would serve them ceaselessly in that way, and thus, in company with the supper, He gives His disciples this precious presentation of Himself as the girded servant washing their feet with water.

As they looked upon the bread and wine, it would bring to their remembrance Himself upon the cross bearing their "sins in His own body on the tree." Eating that bread and drinking that wine, they would feed upon His death and drink in that love which had done all this for them - which had saved them and brought them to God without one sin remaining to bar their entrance into His holy presence. Looking upon that towel and that basin with its water, they would have their eyes, through faith, turned upon Himself in His present love for them - a love that, though exercised from glory (outside the sight of their natural eye), would travel with them all the way across the wilderness world in which for the time He was leaving them. In realizing His ceaseless service for them, as washing their feet, whatever that washing might mean, they would enjoy His presence and share in His own joys.

To be in the enjoyment of the presence of Jesus and to share His own joys with Him is everything to the heart that knows and loves Him. Such it was to Peter, and he readily seized the force of the Lord's words, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." In eagerness to possess himself fully of the blessing proposed in the Lord's words, he replies, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands

and my head;" his desire being that not only his feet might be clean, but his whole person fitted for association with his Savior. He had the consciousness not merely that his feet needed washing, but that his whole nature and being required cleansing. Occupied with his own feelings, he was in ignorance of the work of grace that had already been wrought by the Lord. He was just in the state of soul in which thousands of Christians are at this moment; that is, misunderstanding practical cleansing of the ways, or, as it is sometimes put, confusing standing with state.

Peter's reply becomes the occasion for the Lord to state plainly this difference: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean." One whose body is washed all over in the morning, or bathed (a different word in the original being used for this to that which is used for washing the feet) only needs to cleanse his feet during the day before partaking of the refreshments provided by the host, for his feet, in Eastern countries where sandals only were used, become defiled with walking. The one who entertains provides water for the washing of the feet of his guest, but not water for the bath, which would imply uncleanness of person. The Lord refers to this custom in His rebuke to Simon for treating Him with neglect in this respect: "Thou gavest Me no water for My feet."

The spiritual significance, therefore, of the Lord's reply to Peter is very plain. As to the washing of the person, the disciples were clean - they were regenerate - they were "clean every whit." They were already possessed of a new life and standing before God which nothing could make more perfect. "Born of water and of the Spirit," they possessed a "divine" nature which had fitted them once and forever, as to their persons, for God's presence. They had at all times the title to fellowship with God in the holiest. But in order practically to enjoy this fellowship and to have the consciousness of being in the holiest with Jesus, they needed to have their feet washed from the defilements contracted in their walk through an evil world. This would be done not by the application of the Word to their persons, but by the application of the Word by the Spirit to their hearts and consciences, so that they would practically judge and separate themselves from that in their thoughts and walk which was inconsistent with the nature and character of God. Thus they would be enabled to have part with Jesus in the heavenly blessedness into which, as man, He had entered for them.

We would note here that it is not with blood that either the person or the feet are washed. In both cases it is "the washing of water by the Word." Eph. 5:26. In the one case it is for standing-a once completed act that cannot be repeated. In the other, it is for state, which, being a question of communion or enjoyment, would need to be repeated as often as any defilement in the walk was contracted.

A reference to the typical consecration of the priesthood in connection with the laver, of which this is clearly the blessed antitype, will make this clear. We read in Exodus 29:4, "And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water." Then their coats were put on them, and subsequently blood was put upon the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the right toe. They were sprinkled with the holy anointing oil, and the requisite sacrifices having been offered, they were once and forever sanctified to minister in the priests' office.

Their standing as priests was complete, and thus their title to enter the holy place was always valid; but their practical ability to enter the holy place and minister at the altar before the Lord

depended upon something beside, and that was the daily use of the laver, as described in Exodus 30:19-21: "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: so shall they wash their hands and their feet, that they die not." Their assumption of the priests' office connected itself with the washing of their persons in the water of the laver at the time of consecration; this ability to exercise their office practically, connected itself with the washing of their hands and feet at the laver on every occasion of priestly service.

It is the washing of the feet in the laver for communion and service that the Lord's action in washing His disciples' feet sets before us. The present living service of Jesus from the glory separates "His own which were in the world" through the action of the Word on their consciences, from defilement which, as already sanctified ones, they have contracted in their walk. Thus they may have part with Him in the service and worship of God, as priests with Himself inside the holiest.

All believers, little as they may know it and enjoy it, are perfected priests before God. Their bodies have been washed "with pure water." The blood of Christ has been sprinkled on them, and they have been anointed with the Holy Ghost. Their consecration is a complete and finished act, and they are unchangeable - as Peter says, "a holy priesthood." They are the sons of Aaron; but to have part with the true Aaron - with Christ now in the holiest in heaven - their feet must be washed constantly at the laver.

Christ is the One who applies the water of the laver. Believers do not wash their own feet. He does it for them. It is according to His knowledge of what suits the presence of God that He washes their feet. This action, in love and intelligence, is all from Himself. Our salvation and consecration to the priesthood is a simple sovereign act of Christ's love. We are passive in His hands as to it. So our communion depends on Christ and not on ourselves. It is a simple, sovereign act of love on His part that washes our feet and restores us to communion. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Restored to communion and power for service when it has been lost through carelessness, we know who has restored us. We bless Him for it. It is all we can do. We know ourselves to be "Clean every whit" before God, even when out of communion. Unhappy when out of communion, we feel that our feet want washing; we look to Jesus and find Him at our feet, washing them; we realize His grace in this action, and again our hearts are happy, as again in conscious association with Himself, we have "part" with Him.

Blessed and precious Savior, ever keep our hearts in the sense of Thy grace and love, while humbled in heart in the sense of all that, as to our hearts and ways, makes Thy service so consciously necessary.

Advice on Fishing

Gen. 22 and Psalm 46

We cannot meditate upon Old Testament scriptures without being struck with the faith of the Old Testament saints. It was, no doubt, the pattern of that of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when upon earth, who alone is the perfect example of faith, as of every other perfection. It will also be that of the godly Jewish remnant in the latter day under their last and bitter trials. It counts upon the faithfulness of God and pierces through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, right up to God Himself. We have a very striking example of it in Psalm 46 which may well put many of us to shame, as it often does me.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." A refuge is a place to flee to from impending and known danger. A sinner's fleeing for refuge to Christ implies a sense of imminent danger. He is everlasting security from impending judgment; He is the true city of refuge from the avenger of blood (Numb. 35:13, etc.). He is also the strength of His people in their conscious weakness. He does not always deliver us out of our troubles, but sustains us in them, and carries us through them, which is far better, and enables us to say in our feeble measure, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Matt. 11:26.

Mary and Martha could never have known the present sympathy and resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ if they had not experienced the death of their brother. It was when sickness, death, the grave, and corruption had each done its worst and seemed to have robbed them forever of their beloved one, that the Lord stepped in and showed them Himself as they had never before known Him. The sisters had sought the Lord in their trouble, and such is always its effect where there is real faith. Blessings tend, because of what we are, to elate us; and often we run off with them to enjoy them, and forget God. Trouble brings us to our knees. It is good when our blessings also have this effect. See the beautiful example of this in Gideon (Judg. 7:15). He did not rush off, elated, to tell the hosts of Israel the cheering tidings he had heard, but first worshiped, before returning to the host. God was a very present help to him in his trouble, and such was the effect. But the psalmist goes on to say, "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

First, let us reflect, for a moment, what faith it was for a Jew, whose revealed hopes were connected principally with the earth, to use such language as this! All that was properly a Jewish hope was, humanly speaking, gone if the earth were removed. What faith it was, then, that could enable a Jew thus to count upon the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises in the face of such a catastrophe! But faith always counts upon God. Again, what but implicit faith in the living God could enable the psalmist to speak of a city and a river to make it glad, if the earth were removed? The city here is not the heavenly Jerusalem, but the earthly. The land was yet theirs only by promise, and they waited till God should give it to them and settle them in it. In patience, they possessed their souls, and did not forestall God by building a city for themselves. The heavenly country they sought in Canaan was one with Jehovah in their midst. They waited for that, and

confessed in the meantime, that they were strangers in the land (Heb. 11:9).

We must not explain away what is Jewish and earthly, because of what is Christian and heavenly. The city spoken of in Psalm 46 is surely Jerusalem in Canaan, which is to be the center of blessing and of government for the whole world; as it is written, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge [rule] among the nations" etc. (Isa. 2:3, 4). If all the saints of old were looking for heaven, death would have been a step in the direction of their hope, and there would have been nothing particularly remarkable in their dying in faith. But seeing that, for the most part, they looked for the fulfillment of God's promises concerning Palestine, it was stupendous faith for them to believe that, though they died out of it, God would give it to them. But, to return-"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." This must be the earthly city. The heavenly one, when established, will need no help. It will be out of the reach of harm. Not so the earthly; even at the close of the millennial peace and blessing, there will be the hosts of Gog and Magog gathered against her. But God shall help her, and that right early; no long conflict, no long siege, no protracted slaughter shall characterize her deliverance. Fire shall come down from heaven and consume them (Rev. 20:9).

How needful the exhortation is, "Be still, and know that I am God." We are very prone to agitate and busy ourselves in times of trouble, but it avails nothing; it only betrays our want of faith and entangles and distracts us still more. The proper effect of trouble is patience, and of patience, experience in the ways of God, etc. (Rom. 5:3, 4). "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." This is emphatically an answer to the faith expressed in the Psalm; it is Jewish and earthly, but we can and do share with those faithful Jews, and rejoice with them in the prospect and assurance of their blessing, although God has prepared some better thing for us.

Having already alluded to the brilliant faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, who counted upon God to give them the land of promise when dying out of it, I will close these few lines with references to that of Abraham in Gen. 22 God had called upon him to offer up his only begotten son in whom all the promise centered. We are familiar with the scene, but there are one or two features in it well worthy of continual notice.

We see, first, the promptness of the patriarch, the absence of all hesitation. "And Abraham rose up early in the morning." "He staggered not" at the requirement of God, through unbelief, any more than he had done at the promise of God (Rom. 4:20). His promptness was equal to his faith, and the fruit of it. Again, he was not more prompt than he was steadfast. He had ample time in his three days' journey to have reasoned himself out of his purpose, and to have persuaded himself that there must have been some mistake, etc. But no, he had the living God before his soul, and could trust Him to make good all He had spoken concerning Isaac, though he slew him. "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." What implicit faith in God that raiseth the dead (see Heb. 11:17-19)! And when they had come to the place, and the altar and the wood had been deliberately arranged, he "bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood," etc.

In Abraham, we see, in type, the Father offering up His Son, and now, at this point, we have the Son giving Himself. An obedient father had an obedient son; for, whatever others may think, I do not believe that the binding was to prevent resistance; I believe that Isaac here was an intelligent and willing victim. But every type is imperfect, for what created thing could set forth the excellency

of the Person or the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in perfection? Hence the importance of our not interpreting Christ by the types, but the types by Christ, lest we should attach to Him the imperfections of the types. This has been done, and teaching subversive of atonement and the personal glory of Christ has been based upon it to the damage of many souls. Isaac, although a beautiful type in the scene before us, was imperfect in three momentous particulars, at least.

He did not know, till the very last, what was coming upon him. The Lord Jesus Christ did. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.... By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once" (Heb. 10:9, 10). Oh, what devotedness to His Father! What unspeakable love to us! It was more than a cruel and ignominious death that He suffered; He bore the judgment of God due to us.

A way of escape was found for Isaac. There was none for the Lord! "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39).

3) If Isaac had died, he would not have made atonement for one sin. There could have been no virtue in his death, for he was only a man, and a sinner also. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man" (Jer. 17:5); but of the Lord it is said, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Psalm 2:12). He was God, as well as man.

Does not such faith as we have been reviewing, put us to shame? Well it may. Yet, if we have not the faith of Abraham or of David, we have the all gracious, all-faithful and Almighty God, the same yesterday and today and forever. Let us look unto Jesus, the only perfect object and pattern of faith. Who could ever be tried as He was? Yet, when persecuted, crucified, and reviled, He patiently bore it all. Such contradiction of sinners He endured against Himself; that is, to His own disadvantage and reproach. "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40); so He was taunted, but He endured. Everlasting praise to His precious name!

Following Christ

The Christianity of the closet, and the Christianity of busy life are not, as is often fancied, conflicting things. The man who has fellowship with Jesus in his solitude knows how to carry the savor of the fellowship even into the most common affairs. There is need of prayer in this matter; for though we be convinced that there is but one thing needful, we are easily led away like Martha to busy and trouble ourselves about "many things." Many things we must needs do and care about while we are in this body, but the work to which Christ calls us is to do and care about these things in such a spirit as to make them part and parcel of our great work-the work of keeping close to Jesus, and of following Him whithersoever He goeth. If we were only willing to leave all and follow Christ, He would make the cross not heavy to be borne, but a delight. It would be more pleasant than the load of gold is to the miser or the insignia of power to the earthly monarch. "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

A Form of Godliness

It is one of the special characteristics of the last days that men shall have "a form of godliness," but deny the power thereof. The form suits the worldly heart because it serves to keep the conscience at ease while the heart enjoys the world in all its attractiveness. Satan's masterpiece is the uniting of things apparently Christian with things decidedly unholy; he deceives more effectually by this means than by any other.

God Seeking the Sinner

Under the law, God was in the holy place, and the unclean must be removed, and the priest and the Levite attend that sanctuary. But in the gospel, God is in the unclean place, seeking the ruined ones. Jesus is going about doing good; the Stranger from heaven has come where man lay in his blood, and has looked on him and had compassion; has gone and meddled with all that pollution, untouched by it, washed the wounded sinner from his blood, and anointed him with oil (Ezek. 16). All this He has done, and changed places with the wounded sinner also. For though rich, He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich.

God Will

"Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." That is, our Lord prepares us for this, that the anxiety which dreads an evil, thing on the morrow is nothing but unbelief. When the morrow comes, the evil may not be there; if it comes, God will be there. He may allow us to taste what it is to indulge in our own wills; but if our souls are subject to Him, how often the evil that is dreaded never appears. When the heart bows to the will of, God about some sorrow that we dread, how often the sorrow is taken away, and the Lord meets us with unexpected kindness and goodness. He is able to make even the sorrow be all blessing. Whatever be His will, it is good. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Godly Exercise in Time of Trouble

The thirteenth chapter of Leviticus is a fine study for all who are really interested in the condition of the assembly. We cannot attempt to dwell upon it here, but we earnestly commend it to the attention of our brethren. The priest was not to pronounce judgment hastily in any given case. The most patient care was needed lest anyone should be put out as a leper who really was not one, or lest any real case of leprosy should escape. There was to be no haste and no indifference.

It is of the deepest importance to understand the real object, nature, and character of discipline in the Church of God. It is to be feared that they are very little understood. The grand object of discipline is the glory of God as involved in the holiness of His assembly, and the real good of the soul toward whom the discipline is exercised.

And as to the nature and character of discipline, we should ever remember that in order to take part in it according to the mind of Christ, we must make the person's sin our own, and confess it as such before God. It is one thing to stand up in heartless formality and declare one out of the assembly, and it is quite another for the whole assembly to come before God in true brokenness and contrition of heart to put away with tears and confession some evil that could not be gotten rid of in any other way. If there were more of this latter, we should see more divine restoration.

God's Joy

The grace and love of God are shown out first in seeking, and then in receiving the sinner. In the first two parts of the parable in Luke 15, we have the seeking; in the third, the reception by the father. One great principle runs through them all-it is the joy of God to seek and to receive the sinner. He is acting upon His own character. No doubt it is joy to the sinner to be received, but it is the joy of God to receive him; "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad"-not merely meet that the child should be glad to be in the house. Blessed truth! It is the tune that God has raised, and to which every heart in heaven responds. God Himself strikes the chord; heaven echoes it; and so must every heart down here that is tuned by grace. What discord then must self righteousness produce!

God's Order

"I know him [Abraham], that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Genesis 18:19. Strange that in the families of so many of God's people nowadays, His instituted rule is exactly inverted-the children lead the parents, and the wife rules the husband. Nothing but evil can accrue from such a state of things.

Grace

Read Numb. 10:1-10

What is it that we need first and most if the life that lies ahead of us, if the Lord will, is to be fruitful in the things that are pleasing to God? How are we to fulfill the relationships of life, and in them adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things? What is it that lies at the basis of all spiritual life and service, and without which we can only fail in every sphere of life? With the exercises that come to most of us as we face the future, we may well ask such questions as these; and if we do we shall find that there is but one answer to them, and it is this: What is needed first and most and continuously, and without which we know nothing of the art of Christian living, is **THE FULL AND UNRESERVED ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT WE BELONG TO GOD**. Without this we build without a foundation, we waste our energies, and live unreal and useless lives. Now if we belong to God, His claims are paramount; since He is God, that must be so, but the fact that He has redeemed us gives Him a double title; and for our blessing as well as for His glory we must own His claim and obey the word, "YIELD YOURSELVES TO GOD."

This great and indispensable truth is remarkably illustrated for us in the use of the silver trumpets. They figured largely in the everyday life of Israel, for never a day passed that they did not make their appeal to that people. They were blown on God's behalf for people to hear, and they were blown on the people's behalf for God to hear. It must be noted that they were made of silver. Every Israelite that was numbered from twenty years old and upward had to bring half a silver shekel as an offering to Jehovah—no more and no less. It was called atonement money. It was the acknowledgment on their part that they belonged to God who had redeemed them by blood and power out of the bondage of Egypt for His own pleasure, and the silver thus offered was devoted to the service of the sanctuary; and of part of it these trumpets were made (Exod. 30).

When the priests blew long and loud upon these trumpets, they proclaimed to the uttermost limits of Israel that the people belonged to God; that He had redeemed them and had rights over them that could not be challenged. They were to hold themselves at His disposal. It mattered not with what they were engaged, God's call was imperative, and their own pursuits must take second place, must be abandoned in fact, and that immediately at the time the silver trumpets sounded out their assembling call.

Let us give attentive ears to the truth that the silver mouths of these trumpets proclaim, for their story has been written for our learning. Do we not hear the sound of them in the New Testament in such words as these in 1 Cor. 6:19, 20? "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, **AND YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN? FOR YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE,**" and again in 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." In clarion tones these words call to our souls. Yet there is nothing discordant in their sound to him that has ears to hear and a heart to understand; for they do not only tell of an insistent claim but of a great love, a love that paid the price and shed the

blood, that it might possess us righteously and without a rival.

The words themselves are pure like silver, for "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Psalm 12:6. And obedience to the words of the Lord purifies the soul; for we read, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." (1 Pet. 1:22). For practical and continuous purity of heart and life we must keep the great fact that we belong to God before our souls. It is the word of God to us morning by morning. The silver trumpet of His Word proclaims His redemptive rights over us, and the way of blessing for us is to respond in a glad subjection to His will.

1. Calling the Assembly

The first use to which these trumpets were put was "for the calling of the assembly." The tabernacle was the God-appointed center for His redeemed people in those ancient days, and from that center His words went forth, and to it He summoned them when He would. That was the shadow, the picture; Christ is the substance, the reality. And if we are obedient to the Word of God, Christ will be our one and only center. Hear then the call of the silver trumpet of the Word in this respect. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25. "This do in remembrance of Me." 1 Cor. 11:24. If lethargy of spirit has come over us, or if indifference of any sort has crept into our hearts in regard to these matters, may the words of God awaken us from it! And let each of us take heed to himself and not be influenced by another, for "the manner of some" must not affect us, but the Word; and the appeal that the Word makes is a personal one.

Suppose that when the priests at the tabernacle blew upon the silver trumpets calling the people together to hear the Word of the Lord, they were so engrossed with other matters that they did not heed the call. Suppose that Judah had a quarrel with Benjamin, and they considered their quarrel to be of more importance than the call of God, and so did not respond together to it. Suppose each tribe had made a center for itself, with its own laws, creed, and regulations. Suppose some were too busy with domestic, commercial or personal matters to hear the summons. What then? Would God be indifferent? No! The call would continue until some were aroused by it, and from first one tribe and then another there would come forth those who felt and owned God's claim. And there they would stand at last in the God-appointed meeting place, where He could speak to them and commune with them. Not many, we will suppose, only two or three when compared with the multitude of the people, but obedient to the call of God and united in that obedience! Would the Lord despise them? Would He refuse to say to them what He would have said to the whole of Israel if they had been there? We may be sure that the Word would not be less rich, or the meeting less blessed because not all were there. And so it is and will be as long as God's Word abides; and those who obey it, though but two or three, will prove how faithful He is to it. He cannot deny Himself.

2. The Journeying of the Camps

The people were pilgrims in that great wilderness, and they were not to settle down and make their home in it. They were traveling to Canaan, and they needed to be reminded of the fact. So when

the time came for them to pass on, an alarm was blown; the trumpets kept them on the move, and this we need also. How soon we can stagnate and sleep and forget our heavenly home and calling! Yet God is gracious, and His Word awakes us to renewed spiritual energy. It blows an alarm and says to us, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5:14. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:2. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1:13. In such words as these do we hear the silver trumpets sounding an alarm, lest we should mind earthly things and forget our high destiny and our Father's house. For these two purposes the trumpets were blown on God's behalf in those times of old, and for us in these last days the word comes to us saying, "He that hath an ear, let him hear," and "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

3. When in Conflict With the Oppressor

Then the priests had to sound the silver trumpets on behalf of the people that they might be remembered before God. They had to do this when they were in conflict with their foes, for they had foes to meet, and they were never by their own prowess equal to them. And God made them that way, that they might in times of stress depend upon Him. They could not do without God. He was their refuge and resource and strength. When they blew the trumpets in the day of battle it was as though they said, "O God, we are Thine, for Thou hast redeemed us; undertake for us against the oppressor." And God ever responded to their appeal. And will He disappoint us if we take up this stand in faith? Let us test Him and see. How fierce are the struggles in which some Christians engage! They desire to do right and be overcomers when sore temptations beset them; they yearn after the victorious life, but they seem to yearn in vain; hope and disappointment have alternated in their experience, and the outcome of it is that, finding the foe too strong for them, they are discouraged and ready to give up the fight. Let all such learn to use the silver trumpets. Let the great fact that they are redeemed of the Lord get a firm hold upon their souls, and let them tell it out to God. Let their cry be, "O God, I am Thine; full of failure I am, often defeated I have been, yet I am loved by Thee, and redeemed by Thee, and at so great a cost; I cannot fight this battle; fight it for me; my foes are Thy foes, and Thine are mine; I hide in Thee and own that only through Thee can I be more than conqueror."

The Christian life is not a life of ease. It is not described in the Word in the language of the bedchamber, but of the battlefield. The world, the flesh and the devil are opposed to us if we belong to God. If we lose the sense that we belong to Him, we cannot prevail in the fight; but when we blow the trumpets before Him, then will the word be fulfilled, "Ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies." Numb. 10:9.

These sons of Jacob were to acknowledge God in all their circumstances. Whether they were exalted or brought low, whether they prospered or suffered adversity, whether they rejoiced or wept, the redemption note had to be dominant. And how else shall we be kept from independence of God when things go well with us? We are safe in the days of gladness if we rejoice before the Lord and own Him as the giver of every mercy, and if we hold ourselves and His gifts for Him, the Giver to whom we belong. And we are comforted and sustained if we call upon Him in the day of sorrow. If we blow the silver trumpet and say-

"LORD I AM THINE, though sorrows gather round me,

And death's dark shadow thwart my path is thrown; Savior divine, Thy outstretched hand upholds me,

And, being Thine, I shall not walk alone."

5. At the Beginnings of Their Months

The beginnings of their months spoke of the constant changes in this life. At every change it is our privilege and our safety to depend upon God and to do His will whose we are. "Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." Jas. 4:15. No change in our circumstances ought to be contemplated, much less completed, without the use of the silver trumpets. "O God, we belong to Thee; guide us in all our ways," should be our cry. The young man entering business, young Christians forming friendships, associations, new relationships, should let the great fact that they are bought with a price control them, and pour out the joyous notes of this blessed truth in the Lord's ear. Thus will they be spared many sorrows and preserved from great disaster. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Pro. 3:6.

6. Over Their Burnt Offerings and Peace Offerings

With these sacrifices the people approached

unto God. The burnt offering was a type of our

worship, and the peace offering of our fellowship; our worship which has Christ, the beloved Son of God who went into death, as its subject, and our fellowship which finds its life and its food in Him also. But we cannot approach to God for worship except as redeemed by the blood of Christ. Vain and presumptuous is the notion of the modernist that he does not need this; "Without the shedding of blood is no remission." And the blood that has redeemed us gives us boldness before God, so that we can in holy fellowship unite in worship before Him, His redeemed ones. Hence we sing the new song unto our great and blessed Savior: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."

"I AM THE LORD THY GOD," is God's final word in the instructions given for the use of these trumpets. He can brook no rival. He must be supreme. For His pleasure He has redeemed us, and His will for us is good, perfect, and acceptable. It is not against us, but for us. It is against all that could do us harm, and has nothing but blessing for us; and as we own Him and live as those who belong to Him, as we daily, hourly, blow the silver trumpets, we shall prove that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Grace With Salt

"Ye are the salt of the earth." Matt. 5:13.

I have just read a statement of a Christian writer to the effect that the salt of the earth needs to be rubbed in, even if it smarts.

I have heard and read many developments of the salt theme. The outline usually runs the same course: salt seasons, purifies, preserves. But somebody ought to remind us that salt also irritates. Real living Christianity rubs this world the wrong way. "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John 17:14. Godly living is in itself a rebuke to this age, and this world resents the light that exposes its corruption.

We are going to a lot of trouble these days developing a brand of Christianity that will not irritate this world. The only salt that will not irritate is "salt without savor," and our Lord said such salt, whether table salt or spiritual salt is "good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men."

Have Faith in God

How prone we are, in moments of pressure and difficulty, to turn the eye to some creature resource! Our hearts are full of creature confidence, human hopes, and earthly expectations. We know comparatively little of the deep blessedness of looking simply to God. We are ready to look anywhere and everywhere rather than unto Him. We run to any broken cistern, and lean on any broken reed, although we have an exhaustless Fountain and the Rock of Ages ever near.

And yet we have proved times without number that "creature streams are dry." Man is sure to disappoint us when we look to him. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" And again, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For He shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited." Isa. 2:22; Jer. 17:5,6.

Such is the sad result of leaning upon the creature-barrenness, desolation and disappointment. It is like the heath in the desert. No refreshing showers-no dew from heaven-no good-nothing but drought and sterility. How can it be otherwise when the heart is turned away from the Lord, the only source of blessing? It lies not within the range of the creature to satisfy the heart. God alone can do this. He can meet our every need, and satisfy our every desire. He never fails a trusting heart.

But He must be trusted in reality. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say" (Jas. 2:14) he trusts God, if he does not really do so? A sham faith will not do. It will not do to trust in word, neither in tongue. It must be in deed and in truth. Of what use is a faith with one eye on the Creator, and another on the creature? Can God and the creature occupy the same platform? Impossible. It must be God or-what? The creature, and the curse that ever follows creature-confidence.

Mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer. 17:7,8.

How blessed! How bright! How beautiful! Who would not put his trust in such a God? How delightful to find oneself wholly and absolutely cast upon Him-to be shut up to Him-to have Him filling the entire range of the soul's vision-to find all our springs in Him-to be able to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defense; I shall not be moved." Psa. 62:5,6.

Note the little word "only." It is very searching. It will not do to say we are trusting in God while the eye is all the while upon the creature. It is much to be feared that we frequently talk about looking to the Lord while, in reality, we are expecting our fellow man to help us. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the

reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. 17:9,10.

How needful to have the heart's deepest motive springs judged in the presence of God! We are so apt to deceive ourselves by the use of certain phrases which, so far as we are concerned, have no force, no value, no truth whatever. The language of faith is on our lips, but the heart is full of creature confidence. We talk to men about our faith in God, in order that they may help us out of our difficulties.

Let us be honest. Let us walk in the clear light of God's presence, where everything is seen as it really is. Let us not rob God of His glory, and our own souls of abundant blessing, by an empty expression of dependence upon Him, while the heart is secretly going out after some creature stream. Let us not miss the deep joy, peace, and blessing, the strength, stability, and victory, that faith in the living God, in the living Christ of God, and in the living Word of God gives. Oh! let us "have faith in God."

Haven: God Never Allows

God never allows the enemy to gain power over us, unless it is a judicial result of our own failure. He never allows us to be brought under the power of evil, unless there has been a primary state of soul departing from Himself. The weakest, the most ignorant believer will be kept from the wiles and power of the enemy so long as the heart is true and loyal to Christ. We need to be true and faithful, and have the conscience open to the enlightenment of the Word and the Spirit of God.

Just as surely as a child of God is abiding in quietness at the feet of Jesus and hearing His Word, not all the power and malice and cunning of Satan can succeed in drawing him away.

Heaven Opened

We may point to the fourfold opening of the heavens, as Scripture records it. In Matthew 3 we find the heavens opened to gaze down on the Son on earth. Never before do we read of the heavens being opened excepting in vision (Ezek. 1:1), but now that there was an object on earth worthy of their opening to, they were opened unto Him. In Acts they are again opened to Stephen, and to us with him (Heb. 2:9), to look up at Jesus, rejected of man, but exalted of God. Pass on now to Revelation 19, and we find them again opened to allow Him to come forth to execute vengeance on His enemies. In John 1:51, we find them again opened to gaze on Him when, peace having been proclaimed, the angels wait on Him to do His bidding, when as Son of man He has set up His kingdom, when His will is done on earth as in heaven.

Holy Brethren

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Heb. 3:1.

This title of "holy brethren" is bestowed on all believers, and its force is seen by a reference to the 11th and 12th verses of the 2nd chapter of Hebrews, where it is said of Christ that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren. "This declaration of God's name by Christ to His brethren is presented in its wondrous bearing by the Lord when, after He was risen from the dead, He said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God and your God." This is the blessed title of the relationship which God bears toward every poor sinner saved through the grace of Christ. It is no place of assumption for believers, nor is it a title to which attainments may give a claim. It is the place and title which Christ's grace establishes for those who know Him in the reality of His sufferings, His humiliation, and death.

The position of Him whose calling they obey gives its character to theirs, whether viewed in relation to their inheritance above, or to their sojourn down here below. It is not an earthly, but a heavenly calling that believers are brought into by Christ. Called from earth to heaven, they are to know the place of Him who is the Captain of their salvation and the firstborn among many brethren.

The exhortation is to consider Christ in the two offices which are here expressed, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The position toward Israel of Moses and Aaron are types of these two offices of Christianity. But now, in contrast to the law, God has spoken to us from heaven through Christ who is the Apostle of our profession, and that we have a High Priest in heaven who accomplished eternal redemption by His own blood-shedding while here on earth.

The point of the exhortation is to consider who it is that sustains these offices, and how competent He is to the discharge of all which they imply. He was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as Moses was faithful; but He was as much above Moses as the owner of the house is higher than he who is but a servant, though faithful, in the house. Christ was the builder of the house, and thus has more honor than the house. He was the builder of all things and "He that built all things is God." Thus by the simplest human footsteps (if I may so speak) we are led forward to see this blessed lowly One who was not ashamed to call us brethren, sustaining the office of Apostle, or communicating of God's mind, and the High Priest of our profession, as bringing us into God's presence by virtue of His accomplished sacrifice. He is shown not merely as "a son over His own house," the Head and Lord of that house, but as the sovereign Creator of all things, the eternal God!

These offices were familiar to the Hebrews; they had their typical presentation in Moses the prophet of the Lord, and in Aaron who was the consecrated high priest; but they are now sustained by Him who is at once in grace the first-born among many brethren, and in intrinsic glory the Son of God, and Creator and upholder of all things.

The Importance of the Written Word: Lessons of the Trip to Emmaus

Luke brings before us in chapter 24 the journey to Emmaus, where Jesus joins Himself to the two downcast disciples who discoursed, as they went, on the irreparable loss they had sustained. Jesus hears this tale of sorrow from their lips, brings out the state of their hearts, and then opens the Scriptures instead of merely appealing to the facts in the way of evidence.

This employment of the Scriptures by our Lord is very significant. It is the Word of God which is the truest, deepest, weightiest testimony, even though the risen Jesus Himself was there and its living demonstration in Person. But it is the written Word which, as the Apostle Paul shows, is the sole, adequate safeguard for the perilous times of the last days. Here, too, the loved companion of Paul proves in the history of the resurrection the value of the Scriptures. The Word of God—here the Old Testament interpreted by Jesus—is the most valuable means for ascertaining the mind of God. Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable—yes, able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Hence, our Lord expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. What a sample that day was of the walk of faith! Henceforth, it was not a question of a living Messiah on the earth, but of Him that was dead and risen, now seen by faith in the Word of God. On the face of the account, this was the great living lesson that our Lord was teaching us through the two disciples (Luke 24:13-29).

But there was more. How is He to be known? There is but one way that can be trusted in which we can know Jesus. There are those in Christendom that talk a great deal about Jesus, yet who are as ignorant of His glory as a Jew or a Mohammedan. Our own day has seen how men can speak and write eloquently of Jesus as a man here below, all the while serving Satan—denying His name, His Person, His work, when they flatter themselves that they are honoring Him, like the weeping women (chap. 23:27), without a grain of faith in His glory or His grace. Hence, it is of all importance that we should learn wherein He is to be known. Thus Jesus sets forth the only way in which He can rightly be known. On this alone God can put His seal. The seal of the Holy Spirit is unknown until there is the submission of faith to the death of Jesus. And so our Lord breaks bread with the disciples. It was not the Lord's supper; but Jesus made significant use of that act of breaking the bread, which the Lord's supper brings before us continually. In it, as we know, bread is broken—the sign of His death. Thus Jesus was pleased that the truth of His death should flash upon the two souls at Emmaus. He was made known to them in the breaking of bread—in that most simple but striking action which symbolizes His death. He had blessed, broken, and was giving the bread to them, when their eyes were opened and they recognized their risen Lord (v. 31).

There is a third supplemental point which I now touch on—His instant disappearance after He was made known to them in the sign of His death. This is also characteristic of Christians. We walk by faith, not by sight.

Thus the great Evangelist, who exhibits what is most real for man's heart now, and what most of all maintains the glory of God in Christ, binds these things together for our instruction. Though Scripture was perfectly expounded by Jesus, and though hearts burned as they heard of these

wondrous things, still it must be shown in concentrated form that the knowledge which alone can be commended by God or trusted by man is this- Jesus known in that which brings His death before the soul. The death of Jesus is the sole foundation of safety for a sinful man. For a Christian, this is the true way of knowing Jesus. Anything short of this, anything other than this, whatever supplants it as a fundamental truth, is false. Jesus is dead and risen, and must be known so if He is to be known aright. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." 2 Cor. 5:16.

And so that same hour we see the disciples returning to Jerusalem and finding the eleven there, who say, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (vv. 32-34). There is another truth needing to be known and proved-His real resurrection, who stood in the midst of them with a "Peace be unto you," not without His death, but founded on it, and thus declared. So in the scene at Jerusalem this finds its full display; for the Lord Jesus comes into their midst and partakes of food before their eyes. There was His body; it was risen. Who could any longer doubt that it was really the same Jesus who died and will yet come in glory? "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." They identify the risen Jesus with Him whom they had known as their Master, and withal as still man, not a spirit, but having flesh and bones, and capable of eating with them. (vv. 36-43.)

After this our Lord speaks once more of what was written in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms concerning Himself (v. 44). Once again, it is the Word of God gloriously revealed, not merely to two of them, but to all, in its unspeakable value.

In His Steps

"Who is he that smote Thee?" Matt. 26:68. This is one of the questions that our Lord did not answer. His persecutors thought He did not know who smote Him. To them our Lord's silence meant He was ignorant of who the culprit was. It is natural for fallen men to register in their memories every injury that is done to them. Looking back over a period of years, most men can tell without a single omission who smote them. Favors may be forgotten, but smittings are not. It is so easy for even the children of God to be constantly telling who smote them.

What an example of grace is this silence of our Lord! No one should know from His lips who had injured Him. He would not use His perfect knowledge, His omniscience as the on of God to reveal the identity of the man who had smitten Him so injuriously. They asked Him to tell, but He bore Himself in the same unruffled calm, and said nothing.

May we learn from Him. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.

In His Steps: Learn of Me

"Follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." 1 Pet. 2:21-23.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matt. 11:29, 30.

While the Lord Jesus Christ is the great theme of all Scripture, yet every separate portion presents some special aspect of His Person or work. The above passages bring before us, very blessedly, the lowly grace that marked His pathway of suffering as the perfectly subject Man.

In one passage we are exhorted by the Apostle Peter to follow His steps; in the other, believers are invited by the Lord Himself to learn of Him. It is good for each one to heed the exhortation and to respond to the gracious invitation. To do so, however, we need to inquire reverently, What are His steps that we are exhorted to follow? and, What is it that the Lord would have us to learn of Him?

"HIS STEPS" (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

First, let us listen to the exhortation of the Apostle. There came a day in the history of Peter when the Lord said to His restored disciple, "Follow Me" (John 21:19). Now the Apostle passes on these words to each one of us, as he says, "Follow His steps." In Christendom, and even by true believers, the words, "Follow His steps" are often used in a vague and loose way. Even unconverted people will seize upon these words, misusing them to convey the false thought that if men carry out the precepts of the sermon on the mount they will be very good Christians, and thereby secure the salvation of their souls. Probably those who speak thus lightly about following His steps, would be at a loss to turn to the scripture where the exhortation is found, and even so would prefer their own interpretation of the words rather than inquiring the meaning with which they are used by the Holy Spirit.

Turning to the passage in which the exhortation occurs, we at once learn from the context that these words are addressed to believers—those of whom the Apostle can say that they have received the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. (1 Pet. 1:9). It is evident, then, that in this scripture there is no exhortation to a sinner to follow His steps in order to obtain salvation. Apart from the sacrificial death of Christ, and faith in His precious blood, there can be no salvation for a helpless sinner. In Scripture God never uses "His steps" to set aside His work.

The exhortation to "Follow His steps" is then addressed to believers; and, moreover, is used with a very distinct meaning. What this meaning is we learn from the four distinct steps that are set before us. It is evident that a great deal that the Lord did in His marvelous life, we cannot, and are not asked to do. He did mighty works, even to raising the dead; He spake as never a man spake. In these ways we are not exhorted to follow His steps. The four steps we are exhorted to follow are

possible for all believers, from the youngest to the oldest.

First, we are reminded that He "did no sin." We know that He went about doing good; and in this same epistle, we are exhorted again and again to "good works," and to "do well." Here, however, the exhortation takes a negative form; we are to follow His steps in this respect, that He did no sin. Whatever happens, whatever circumstances may arise, whatever rebuffs we may have to meet, whatever wrongs we may have to suffer, whatever insults we may have to endure, we are to do no sin. It is comparatively easy to do good as a benefactor, meeting the needs of others; but, seeing we have the flesh in us, it is, at times, difficult to do no sin. It is a greater thing to do no sin in trying circumstances, than to do good in easy ones. The Lord was perfect in all circumstances; and, whatever the circumstances we have to meet, our first care should be to follow His steps, and maintain His character, in this respect, that we do no sin. It is better to suffer wrong than to sin-better to lose your coat than let go the character of Christ.

Second, we read, "neither was guile found in His mouth." However sorely tried by wicked men, no question that He asked, no answer that He gave, no word that fell from His lips, was ever marred by any trace of guile. With us at times malice and envy may even lurk behind words that are "smoother than butter" and "softer than oil." With Him no evil motive was ever hidden under fair speech. Guile lurked behind the apparently innocent question of the religious Pharisees when they asked, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" for we read they were seeking to "entangle Him in His talk" (Matt. 22:15-18). With the flesh in us it is all too possible to seek to entangle one another with smooth speech and innocent-looking questions. In fact, we can even covertly attack one another in the very words we address to God in public prayer. How good then, and necessary the exhortation to follow in the steps of the One in whom no guile was found.

Third, we are reminded that the Lord was one, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." In the presence of insults, false accusation, and malicious charges, He remained silent. When falsely accused before the Jewish council, He "held His peace." To the accusations of the Jews, in the presence of Pilate, "He answered nothing." To Pilate himself, "He answered him to never a word." The mocking Herod may question Him in many words, "but He answered him nothing." (Matt. 26:63; 27:12,14; Luke 23:9). How good for us to follow in His steps and, in the presence of the malicious words of men, whatever their origin, to keep silence. From other scriptures it is clear that the Christian may "entreat," "exhort," and even "rebuke," but never is he to revile or threaten.

Fourth, He "committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." To do no sin, to speak no guile, to keep silence in the presence of malicious words, have a negative character. This last step is positive. If we keep silence in the presence of insults, it is not that there is no answer to evil and malice, but rather that the answer is left with God. We are never to attempt to take vengeance upon the wrongdoer. God retains all vengeance in His own hands. He has said, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge His people." Heb. 10:30. Our part then is to follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus, and in the presence of insults to commit ourselves unto Him that judgeth righteously, remembering that word which says, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Rom. 12:19. Again, we may recall the words of the prophet, "Jehovah is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that one should both wait,

and that in silence, for the salvation of Jehovah." Lam. 3:25, 26; J.N.D. Trans.

Here then we have four steps, taken in perfection by the Lord, that we are exhorted to follow. In all these steps there is no word as to ministry, or any form of service, that would make any show in this world, or bring us into prominence among the people of God. This being so, we might thoughtlessly say, as we read these exhortations, that to do no evil, speak no guile, to keep silence in the presence of insult, and commit oneself to God, does not seem after all very much, and is a little disappointing. If, however, we put these things into practice, and follow His steps, it will assuredly be found that our brethren will not be disappointed in us. Could we but take these steps, others would see in us the most wonderful sight that can be seen in this world—they would see a Christ like man.

God forbid that we should belittle true service for Christ, but let us not forget that we may travel worldwide in service, and preach to thousands, and our names be well known in religious circles, and our service duly recorded in religious papers, and yet all be of little account in God's sight, if these four steps are lacking. Let us remember that we may speak with the tongues of angels and yet be nothing. So, in the day to come, it is possible that a thousand of our fine sermons, on which perhaps we prided ourselves, and for which our brethren may have praised us, will be found to be but dust and ashes, while some little bit of Christ in our lives, which we may have entirely forgotten, will shine out in all its beauty and receive its bright reward. Thus these steps may not take us into the public gaze today, but they will take us far into the kingdom glories in the day to come. In a word, we do well to remember, "Many that are first shall be last; and the last first." Mark 10:31.

"LEARN OF ME" (Matt. 11:29, 30)

It will greatly help us to carry out the Apostle's exhortation to "follow His steps" if we heed the Lord's own words, "Learn of Me." To learn of the Lord we must "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners."

In the early chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, we see the Lord in the midst of Israel, on every hand dispensing grace and power in relieving men of every pressure under which they are found. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, delivered from the power of Satan, forgave sins, and raised the dead. In result men fought against Him without a cause, rewarded Him evil for good, and hatred for love (Psa. 109:5). They laughed Him to scorn; they said, "He casteth out devils through the prince of devils" and He was "a man gluttonous, and a winebibber" (Matt. 9:34; 11:19).

In the presence of the contradiction of sinners, of the hatred that spurned His love, and the evil that scorned His goodness, how did He act? In the presence of all this enmity we read, that He gave Himself unto prayer (Psa. 109:4). Instead of turning upon His opposers and reviling those that reviled Him, He turned to God in prayer and committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.

Thus in this wonderful scene described in Matthew 11, which sums up the effect of His mighty works in the midst of Israel, we are permitted to see how the Lord acts when He is despised and rejected of men. We see Him turning to the Father in prayer, and we hear Him say, "even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." He submits entirely to the Father's will and takes

everything from His hand. Then, with Himself before us as the perfect example, we hear Him say to us, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me."

In Scripture, the "yoke" is always a figure of submission to the will of another. From the beginning to the end of His wonderful path through this world, the Lord, as the perfect Man, was here for the will of the Father. Coming into the world, He could say, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Passing through the world, He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"; and again He says, "I do always those things that please Him." Going out of the world, He could say, in view of the cross, "Not My will, but Thine, be done." (Heb. 10:9; John 6:38; 8:29; Luke 22:42.)

Our little circumstances, however painful and trying at times, are as nothing compared with those the Lord had to face. But whatever they may be, we are exhorted to take the Lord's yoke by quietly submitting to what the Father allows.

Moreover, the Lord says, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." He was not only meek and lowly in manner, but He was "meek and lowly in heart." The right manner that men can see is comparatively easy to put on, but the right condition of heart, that the Lord alone can see, can only result from turning to the Lord in prayer and submitting to the Father's will. By nature we are neither meek nor lowly. Instead of meekly giving way to others, we assert ourselves; instead of having low thoughts of self, we are naturally prone to self-importance. To correct all these natural tendencies of the flesh, the Lord engages us with Himself, as He says, "Learn of Me." As we gaze upon Him, and admire these lovely qualities, we insensibly become changed into His image. We become morally like the One we admire. Alas! the fact that often times we are so little like Him tells, only too plainly, how little we have Himself before our souls-how little we learn of Him.

Taking His yoke and learning of Him, we shall find rest to our souls. Dwelling upon the trying circumstances we may have to meet, fretting our souls over the insults that may be flung at us, the betrayal of false friends, the malice of jealous persons, will bring no rest to the soul. Submitting to what the Father allows, and catching the beautiful spirit of Christ in all its meekness and lowliness, as we learn of Him, we shall enjoy the rest of spirit that was ever the portion of the Lord in a world of unrest.

Moreover, if we take His yoke, and thus submit to the Father's will, we shall find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. For in following His steps, doing no sin, speaking without guile, keeping silence in the presence of insults, and committing ourselves to God, we shall have His support as yoked with Him in submission to the Father's will. And with His support, and in fellowship with Him, we shall find how true are His words, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. "

Thus, as we read these scriptures, we are made conscious that Peter does not exhort us to take impossible steps; and the Lord does not ask us to learn impossible lessons.

Peter exhorts us to do no sin, to use no guile, to be silent in the presence of insults, and to commit ourselves to God.

The Lord asks us to learn of Him, in subjection to the Father's will, in meekness that thinks of others, and lowliness that does not think of self.

"We wonder at Thy lowly mind,
And fain would like Thee be,
And all our rest and pleasure find
In learning, Lord, of Thee."

Incorrigible Man

The incorrigibility of man under all circumstances becomes the ground of the necessity of God's judgment and the vindication of the righteousness of it.

The generation in the day of Christ was tested fully. In His own Person the Lord tried Israel in every way, according to their own prophets. He came as the Bethlehemite, according to Micah, but they sought His life (Matt. 2). He came as the light from the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, according to Isaiah, but was challenged instead of followed (Matt. 4). He came as the King, meek and lowly, according to Zechariah, but was not received (Matt. 21).

Then in the three parables which the Lord delivered at the close of these testings of Israel (Matt. 21 and 22)-those of the two sons, the husbandman of the vineyard, and the marriage of the king's son- He convicts His people under the law, under the ministry of John the Baptist, and under grace.

Are we not, therefore, prepared to see the Master rise up to shut the door? The need of sovereign grace, as well as the vindication of judgment, is made to appear. "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma." Romans 9:29. Man is past moral correction. He is incorrigible and incurable.

Man's state of incurableness and incorrigibility has had a constant illustration in the Word of God, from the beginning to the end. Man has shown himself to be in full bondage to sin, so that he will go in the way of it, in defiance of every argument and every influence which may be used with him.

It is solemn to look at this, but it would be profitable for us to do so. We can easily trace a line of these illustrations all through Scripture.

Cain went on with the desperate purpose of his heart, though the Lord came and personally pleaded with him to turn from his purpose (Gen. 4).

Nimrod made Babel the center of his empire, though God's judgment had just before so awfully marked that place (Gen. 10).

Pharaoh repented not to yield himself under God's hand, though that hand had given witness after witness of its supremacy (Ex. 7-11).

Amalek fought with Israel, though the glory in the pillar and the water from the rock were before him, the witnesses of God's wondrous majesty and power (Ex. 17).

Israel murmured and rebelled again and again in the midst of divine marvels and mercies which spoke to them of love and almightiness (Num.).

Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself after many witnesses of God's power and many gracious, softened movements of his own heart (Dan. 4:30).

Judas betrayed the Lord after years of converse with Him (Matt. 26).

The High Priest invented a lie in the face of a rent veil and the Roman soldiers consented to that lie in the face of a rent tomb (Matt. 28).

The Jews stoned Stephen, though his face was shining under their eyes like the face of an angel (Acts 7).

These are among the samples or instances of the fact that man, by nature, is under bondage to sin, and that no moral influence is powerful enough to work his deliverance. The creature that has proved itself able to withstand such arguments and persuasive as these cases exhibit, has proved itself to be beyond the reach of all moral influence. Hell itself would not cure him or deter him. Man is incorrigible and incurable. Again, we may say with Isaiah, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." Chap. 1:5. Sovereign grace and power must come in. If God does not have a seed, it will all be Sodom.

The Apocalypse, closing the Word of God, closes also this testimony against man. There, in the face of the most awful judgments, executed again and again, man refuses to repent, going on rather to ripen his iniquity like Pharaoh of old, upon whom plague after plague spent itself in vain. And thus, we may say, this book of the Apocalypse (which is eminently a book of divine judgments-judgments not on Israel only, but on the whole world) is the vindication or justification, as well as the history, of judgment. We read there of judgments, but we learn, at the same time, the necessity and demand for judgment, for the incorrigibility of man, the desperate hardness of his heart, is fully exposed again. It is a Pharaoh refusing to repent, Amalek defying and insulting the glory, or man as well as Israel saying, "Where is the God of judgment?" Mal. 2:17. Man is found to be the same from first to last.

Are we then to wonder that the Lord's hand is still stretched out? that vials, trumpets, and seals have still to usher forth the judgments of God, and that the sword of Him that sits upon the white horse has still to do its work of death?

Judgment is God's strange work, but it is His needed work likewise. We may scarcely say, "Is there not a cause?" (1 Sam. 17:29), when we have looked at these cases and read the history of the trial of man's heart from the beginning to the end of it. And I am sure it is well for the soul to hold this fact, this truth about man and his incorrigibility, in remembrance, for, as I have been observing, it so justifies the thought of divine judgment, and so tells us of the necessity of sovereign grace and the interference of divine power.

Judgments are to introduce the kingdom. The earth is to be conducted into a scene of glory by the taking out of it of all that offends and does iniquity. For as grace has been despised, and the Lord who made the world has been disowned and cast out of it, judgment must clear it before it can be the scene of His glory and joy. But "The Lord is...long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9.

Israel in the Wilderness

What mercy was shown to the Israelites in the wilderness! their garments not getting old-God even caring for the clothes on their backs! Think of the mercy that would not let their feet swell! Then, when they wanted a way, God says, I will go before with the ark to find out a way. That was not the place for the ark at all. It was appointed to be in the midst of the camp, but God would meet them in their need. They want spies to go and see the land for them; fools that we are to want to know what is before us. They had to encounter the Amorites, high walls, giants. A land that devours the inhabitant, is their account of it, even with the grapes on their shoulders. Just like us on the way to heaven. They cannot stand these difficulties. We are as grasshoppers, they say. But the real question is what God is.

As saints, we are weaker than the world, and ought to be, but when waiting on God, what is that? When they have not confidence in God, they find fault with the land itself. What a wonderful God He is! He says, If you will not go into Canaan, you must stay in the wilderness, and He turns them, and turns back with them.

Itching Ears: a Mark of Our Day

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

Here we find not closed ears but "itching ears," and those who "turn away their ears from the truth." The ears are not deaf, or stopped, or closed; they are keenly alive and open to hear. They itch in order to catch some sound, but not the truth. No, they turn away from the truth as a sound known but unpleasant, familiar but distasteful, heard on all sides but discredited and avoided.

The itching ear that courts what is congenial to itself turns from the truth. It seeks the sensational, the sentimental, the unreal, the wisdom of this world, but it loathes the truth.

This is solemn and serious! And what is the result? Is it satisfied? Does its itching lead to peace or contentment, or to a solid basis of divine repose? No, but contrariwise; it is "turned unto fables." What a retribution! To turn from the truth is to be turned to fables. How descriptive of our day!

We read, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers." That time has come. These are the men of this generation. Teachers are heaped up whose doctrine suits admirably the corrupted and debased tastes of the itching ears that listen. Sound doctrine such as atonement by blood, the eternity of punishment, and the deity of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, cannot be endured. God's great foundation facts of doctrine are scientifically discarded, and foolish fables and mental aberrations are greedily swallowed instead.

"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord," and the religious ear of the day is feeding on fables. We rapidly approach the time when "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess. 2:11, 12. It is, therefore, a serious thing to trifle with truth, or to think that God takes no cognizance of its treatment at our hands.

The men of this generation are fearfully responsible. They stand on slippery ground. A thousand sacred privileges, an open Bible, a clear and widespread gospel, the working of the Spirit on the earth, the patient grace of God—all these make their responsibility enormous. Thank God, grace and mercy linger. The door is not yet shut. The sweet invitation still holds good. "COME" falls upon the open ear as fully and richly as ever.

"Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Jer. 13:15, 16.

Comments on James 5:1-10

The portion of believers is not in this world. Christ has won them for Himself, that they should be in His likeness in glory, co-heirs with Him. His love would have them enjoy all that He Himself enjoys, for His love is perfect. But if so, they must suffer with Him. If it is given to us to suffer for Him, it is a great privilege, but it is not the portion of all. Nevertheless, all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

It is impossible to escape suffering with Him, for if we have the Spirit of Christ, we feel as Christ felt. Holiness suffers at the sight of the sin which is around, and in seeing the condition of the 'church of God and of His people. There is also sorrow on all sides and the need of souls who will not have Christ or salvation. Each one ought to take up his cross. Besides this, God permits us to suffer because in so doing, we learn patience and that our inheritance is not below. Experience, which is the realization of practical truth, is confirmed in the heart, and hope becomes much clearer and stronger. This, it is true, supposes that the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost, and if this is not the case, God allows suffering, and also sends it, to renew the heart. He chastens whom He loves.

James addresses the rich who have possessions in this world and who do not consider the poor, while "blessed is he that considereth the poor" (Psa. 41:1). He who despises the poor because of his poverty despises the Lord Himself. The Lord Himself in the Psalm preceding the one from which I have quoted says, "I am poor and needy" (Psa. 40:17). The Lord had pronounced His blessing upon the poor; to such the gospel was preached. It was a sign announcing the Messiah. We all know that a poor man may be just as wicked as any other, but riches are a positive danger for us because they nourish pride and tend to dispose the heart to keep aloof from the poor with whom the Lord associated Himself in this world. He who was rich "for your sakes...became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Here the rich had been foremost in evil. They oppressed the poor and kept back from them the wages for which they had labored. James places before us a view of the last days. The cry of the poor had entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts. He exhorts the rich to weep and howl for the miseries that should come upon them. They had lived in pleasure on the earth and had been wanton. But not only this, they had condemned and killed the Just, for when one lives in pleasure, he does not like anyone to come and disturb his happiness. They wished to secure the enjoyment of the world in a false tranquility which thinks neither of God, nor of judgment, nor of death.

If conscience was aroused, they were disturbed and they hardened themselves as far as possible that it might not be aroused.

God does not for the present alter the course of the world. If He did so, He must execute judgment, instead of working in love for the ungodly and sinners. He is not willing to smite them; nevertheless, He is not slack concerning His promise, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish. The Christian then must take courage, must be patient and submissive to

outward evil until the coming of the Lord, even as Christ Himself who did well, and suffered, and waited patiently. Thus the Christian should walk in His steps. Our portion is not in this world. If we suffer for well-doing, this is acceptable to God, and still more so if it is for Christ Himself that we suffer.

The life of our Savior was all suffering and patience; but now He is glorified with God the Father. Soon He will come a second time into the world, in the glory of the Father, and in His own glory, and in the glory of the angels, and then He will be glorified in His saints and will be admired in all them that believe.

In that glorious day, when the poorest of His own-Christians, oppressed by the enemies of the truth-will be like the Lord Himself in glory, we shall make our boast in having been permitted to suffer for Him, and in having maintained patience and silence through the unjustly imposed sufferings of the Christian life. Blessed are they who are found watching, for He will gird Himself and will make them sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them. See Luke 12:35-44. What joy! What grace! It will be the glory of the Savior Himself to give us to enjoy the blessings of heaven in the Father's house, ministering all with His own hands. It is well worthwhile to suffer for Him a little, and for a little while, and then to possess heavenly blessing, communicated by the hand and the heart of Jesus Himself. We shall reign with Him, and enjoy the fruit of the work which we have been permitted to do for Him. If it is only a cup of water given in the name of Jesus, it shall not lose its reward. But it will be far better still to sit down in peace, enjoying those eternal blessings in the Father's house which Christ will abundantly minister to us-precious testimony of His approval and of His love.

Note how the coming of Christ was a present hope. The oppressed one was to have patience until that coming. "Be patient," says Jesus, "until the coming of the Lord." Some one may say, "Then they were deceived." By no means. We may die before the Lord's coming, and, in fact, we know that these saints did die. But they will reap all the fruits of their patience when the Lord comes. And till that moment, they are with the Lord-absent from the body, present with the Lord-and they will come with Him and then will enjoy all the fruit of those sufferings which they had patiently endured for the love of His name seeking to glorify it down here.

This exhortation clearly shows how this hope was a present one which was interwoven with the entire thread of Christian life. It was not a theory in the head, a point of acquired knowledge, or a dogma of belief only. They expected the Lord in person. What consolation for the poor and the oppressed! What a check upon the rich to be constantly expecting the Lord! How good it is to know that He will soon come, that troubles will cease, and that we shall be with Him who has loved us! Nothing produces separation from the world like waiting for the Lord-I do not say the doctrine of His coming, but true waiting for Him. His coming will separate us from it forever. The heart waits until He comes.

The Lord's supper expresses the Christian state-the Lord's death at His first coming, which we celebrate with thanksgiving, remembering Him who has loved us and feeding on His love until He comes to take us to be with Him. It is the formal expression of the practical state of the Christian as a Christian-of Christianity itself. Let us add, that it is by the Holy Spirit alone that we are able to express this in truth.

But remark yet another thing in this exhortation-"Be patient, brethren." We are always waiting for the Lord, if we really understand our position, but whatever may be our desires, we can neither command the Lord to come, nor can we know when He will come. And blessed be His name! the Lord is patient. As long as there is yet one soul to be called by the gospel, He will not come. His whole body, His bride, must be formed; every member must be present, converted and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Then He will come and take us. Christ Himself is seated on the Father's throne, not on His own throne. He also is waiting for that moment with more desire than we are, and therefore the patience of Christ is spoken of-this is the meaning of Revelation 1:9. Also in Revelation 3:10 we read, "because thou hast kept the word of My patience," and in 2 Thessalonians 3:5 (J.N.D.), "the patience of the Christ."

We are taught in Hebrews 10:12 and 13 that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, waiting till His enemies shall be made His footstool. We may well wait if Christ is waiting, but we wait in suffering and conflict. He is waiting to reign, and then He will cause full blessing to flow forth for His own, whether in heaven or on earth, and will banish evil from both.

Thus we need patience that neither self-will nor weariness of the conflict should take possession of our souls, but in the confidence that the time God wills is best, for it is the time which divine wisdom and His love for us have ordained. Let us fix our affections on the Lord and on things above, because we wait for Him with desire of heart, with broken will and with unwavering faith, leaving His return to God's appointed time. We cannot change it, but the heart can have entire confidence in His love, assured that the Lord waits for us with greater love than we for Him. Let us be calm in confidence, patient in the wilderness journey. How sweet to wait for Christ-for the fullness of joy with Him! Thanks be to God, He says, "it is at hand."

James draws two practical consequences from the expectation of the Lord. First, we ought not to resist evil; the Just One did not resist. We must wait with patience, as the husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth, until he have received the early and the latter rain, the means which God uses to bring the fruit of harvest to perfection. The Christian should stablish his heart by this expectation, while passing through the troubles of this life and the persecution of the world which is ever the adversary of the Lord.

Second, He warns the disciples against walking in a complaining and quarrelsome spirit, one toward another. If we are waiting for the Lord, the spirit is calm and contented; it does not get irritated with its persecutors. Moreover, we bear with patience the ills of the desert, and resist evil as Christ resisted, suffering, and bearing wrongs and committing Himself to God. We are contented and quiet, with a happy and kindly spirit, for kindness flows easily from a happy heart. The Lord's coming will put everything right, and our happiness is found elsewhere. This is what Paul says in Philippians 4:5: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." Let us repeat it. How real, how mighty and practical, was this expectation of the Lord! What power it had over the heart! "The Judge standeth before the door."

Then he gives examples. The prophets were examples of suffering affliction, and of patience, and they counted them happy in their sufferings. And they have not been alone; others also have endured and have been counted happy. For example, if we see one suffering unjustly for the name of Jesus, and he is patient and meek, his heart called out on behalf of his persecutors, rather than irritated against them, then we recognize the power of faith, and of confidence in the love and

faithfulness of the Lord. He is calm and full of joy and we say, "See how grace makes that man happy!" We, too, are happy when we suffer; at least, we ought to be so. But it is one thing to admire others who are sustained by the Spirit of Christ, and another to glory in tribulations when we are in them ourselves. We need a broken will, confidence in God and communion with Him who has suffered for us, in order to be able to glory in sufferings.

Jesus Tempted of the Devil

Luke 4:1-15

In Luke 3 we see Jesus taking His place as servant with the excellent in Israel. Then the heavens open and He is owned by the Father as His beloved Son. His delights were with the sons of men, and He is traced not only up to Abraham, the root of Jewish promises (as in Matthew), but to Adam and God Himself., Independent of His proper divine glory as Son of the Father, Jesus is called the Son of the Highest, the Son of God. As man on earth, He was sealed with the Holy Spirit. He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. His entire perfectness now was to fulfill, as a servant, the will of Him who sent Him, for a servant doing his own will is a bad servant. Dependence, waiting, and obedience, are the characteristics of this place, and they are found to perfection in Him. Hence, as in the Psalms, "I waited patiently for the Lord." He would not ask for power, but waits on God. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Put thoroughly to the test, He would do nothing but His Father's will. He was to learn obedience. Having taken the place, He would go through it wholly, experiencing the force of that expression, learning obedience, surrounded by enemies without one comfort here. He had to learn obedience where obedience always included suffering, even to the yielding up of His life. Every single step was humiliation till the end came at the cross where the wrath of God was borne in love to us. No doubt in His rejection He found fields white for harvest, and so shall we, in our measure, when walking in the same path. However, the cross was always before Him. He went on, patiently waiting, and not asking for deliverance. 'He presented God perfectly to man, and also presented perfect man to God.

In chapter 4 just as He begins this walk of suffering obedience publicly, He is led by the Holy Ghost into the wilderness where He is tempted of the devil. There are two ways in which the enemy has power: first, by allurements; second, by terror. In the one, he works upon us through our lusts, presenting what is calculated to attract, and so he rules over us naturally. In the other, he has the power of death. For example, Satan suggests the occasion to Judas and gets him, a covetous man and without the faith that purifies the heart. Satan has no right to rule over men, but he acquires dominion through the lusts of the flesh and through the terror of death. In both he assailed the Lord, but found nothing in Him.

Here we have the devil meeting man in the power of the Spirit of God. Jesus does not say, "I am God, and you are Satan; go away." That would not have glorified God nor have helped us. But as the Lord was led into the wilderness by the Holy Ghost, so in His blessed grace He puts Himself in the place where man was. He has help from none. There was, rather, all that might have stumbled, had it been possible, yet He goes through it all as man. He must be tempted, and must overcome where man not only had failed, but was lying under the power of wickedness.

In verses 2 and 3 He is tempted through hunger. There is no harm in hunger; it is no sin. He could have commanded stones to be made bread, but to do so, save at His Father's word, would have been doing His own will, and then He would not have been the perfect man. Satan tries to

introduce into His heart a desire which was not according to the Word. He succeeded in insinuating a lust into the heart of Adam; he fails with Jesus, though He was forty days exposed to his presence and power. Jesus had to know by experience what it was to have the devil working at Him in solitude, without a single support, without a friend. Thus He measured the power of Satan. The strong man was there, putting forth all his weapons, but the stronger than he overcame; Jesus bound the strong man. He was abstracted from human condition for forty days, not like Moses to be only with God, but as the One who was always with God, to be exposed to Satan. None other man needs to be abstracted in order to be tempted; he has only to go on along with men. In this case, this extraordinary separation was to be with the devil. To be with God He did not need anything out of His everyday path, for it was His natural place; but to be with Satan, He needed it. Others are strangers to God, and at home with Satan. He, in the most adverse things, is a stranger to Satan, and dwells in the bosom of the Father. But He emptied Himself as God to become a servant as man, and there He waits in dependence on the word of Him whom He serves. The living Father had sent Him, and He lived by the Father. He was as man under His authority, and His meat was to do His will. "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer."

In verse 4 it is the written Word He ever uses, and Satan is powerless. What amazing importance Jesus gives the Scriptures! God now acts by the Word, and Satan is resisted morally in this way. A man cannot be touched by Satan while the Word is simply used in obedience. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." It was not as an exercise of divine authority He dismissed Satan, but the enemy is proved unable to grapple with obedience to the Word of God. If he cannot take one out of the path of obedience, he has no power. What could be more simple? Every child of God has the Holy Spirit acting by the Word to keep him.

Jesus does not reason with Satan. A single text silences him when used in the power of the Spirit. The whole secret of strength in conflict is using the Word of God in the right way. One may say, I am not like this perfect Man. It might be so with Christ, but how can I expect the same result? True, we are ignorant, and the flesh is in us; but God is always for us, and He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Temptation may be simply a trial of our obedience, as in Abraham's case, not a snare to lead us astray. Satan presents what has no appearance of evil. The evil would be doing one's own will. It solves every difficulty to ask, not, What harm is there in doing this or that? but, Why am I doing it? Is it for God or myself? Am I to be always under this restraint? Ah, there the secret of our nature comes out. We do not like the restraint of doing what God will approve. It is restraint to the flesh to do God's will! We want to do our own will. To act merely because one must, is law, and not the guidance of the Spirit. The word of God was the motive of Christ and such is Christ's guidance. Not the fencing in of the old man, but the new man living on the Word is our defense against Satan.

The first temptation is an appeal to the need of the body. The second temptation recorded in Luke is the inducement of the world's glory. The third is the religious temptation through the Word of God, and therefore morally the hardest of all to one who values that Word. This is the reason why Luke departs from the actual order of the events in order to group them morally, as is his habit. Thus we have the tempter assailing the Lord Jesus, first, as to man's life; second, as to the power given to man; and third, as to the promises made to Christ Himself.

The Lord might have argued with the devil, but He does not even tell him that the dominion of the world would be His by-and-by. He takes His stand on that which settles everything, and is a perfect example for us. He stands to God's Word and God's worship. He awaits His Word; He worships Him; He serves Him only. How simple and how blessed! It was the immediate link of an obedient heart with God. The question was one of relationship to God. So of old, Eliezer receives blessing, but before he begins to enjoy it, he gives thanks. He had the word first, then the blessing, and what follows? He bows his head and worships. God is the first thought of his heart (Gen. 24). Arid this is still more fully shown out with the Lord here. The last and subtlest temptation was grounded on the promises to Messiah (vv. 9-11). If Thou art the Son of God, why not try? But why should He try, who knew that God was for Him? Why should He be like presumptuous Israel of old, who would go up the hill in disobedience to prove whether the Lord was among them. Not even when Lazarus was sick would He stir till it was the Father's will, though all nature would have moved. For He well knew the great sorrow in the house of Lazarus.

The Lord did not listen. Who would? you say. But you do listen to Satan every day of your life that you seek even a very little bit of the world. But was there not a promise? Doubtless there was, yet why should He throw Himself down to see whether God would be as good as His word? Did He not know that God was with Him? And so with us; let us only have the Word behind us, no matter what may be before us. We should never question whether God is with us. If He does not send us, let us not move, but let us never question His presence. If we are in the simple path of His will, the Holy Spirit will act in us to guide, and not merely on us to correct.

Thus, according to the moral order of Luke's gospel, we have the progressive exercises of a man—first, natural lusts; second, worldly lusts; and last, spiritual temptations. The Lord Jesus was tempted here, not in Eden, but in the great system where we are. He put Himself, by the will and wisdom of God, in the place of our difficulty in the world, where man is. He has gone through all the difficulties that a saint may go through, sin apart, and can now offer help and sympathy to each saint in his own path. We are to walk according to the new nature. Satan cannot touch the new man, but he tries to entice him out of the path of godliness. We need His help to walk as obedient ones where Christ walked.

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee... And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all." (vv. 14, 15) In all things His obedience is shown. Untouched by Satan, He goes forth in unhindered power, and so shall we in the measure in which we, like Him, pass through temptation subject to the will of God and obedient to His Word.

Joseph and His Brethren

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age." Genesis 37:3. For this his brethren hated him; and Joseph dreamed and, for his dreams, his brethren "hated him yet the more." "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit," and ever seeks most diligently to find a cause for the display of its animosity. Joseph could not help the fortune, or misfortune, of his birth; and the dreams of his unconscious hours could afford no honest ground for the hatred of his kindred. But it was jealousy, and "jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire"; and they "could not speak peaceably unto him."

The flesh ever seeks its own, and others' gain often only aggravates it to manifest its works: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like." Galatians 5:19-21. But what we shall see, the Lord helping us, in our short perusal of the life of Joseph, is the unpretentious dignity and perfect manly meekness of one who has to meet all this, though led on in triumph by the One to whom, as his great-grandfather had learned, nothing was too hard.

Highest honor was before this stripling, the youngest but one of all his brethren; and the way to it was through clouds and storms, shame, suffering, and loss. But through it all Joseph exercised the greatest patience-no fighting for his rights, or undue faithless vindication of his character. The language of his life and habit was, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.... My expectation is from Him." Psalm 62:1-5. And God was faithful, as ever, to show Himself strong in the behalf of him whose heart was perfect toward Him. He continually manifested Himself on his side, and crowned his life with honor, and recorded in the list of acts of faith accomplished by the accounted worthy ones, of whom the world was not worthy, what he did "when he died." (Hebrews 11.)

In Genesis 37 Joseph was sent by his father in search of his brethren, but when they saw him they conspired against him-picture of those who, in a later day, when the blessed Antitype of Joseph came, said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him." But Reuben delivered Joseph out of their hands.

It is blessed to see how in every emergency God provided a way through or a deliverance from it for His servant. Truly "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people." Psalm 125:2. It was necessary, in order to the fuller development of the type, for Joseph to be delivered out of the hand of his enemies, while the language of Christ was, "Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man.... Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death." Psalm 22. Nothing but deliverance out of death could be His lot, while with Joseph, as with Isaac on Mount Moriah, it was deliverance from it. For Joseph, "the pit was empty, there was no water in it." The cry of Christ was, "Save Me, O God; for the

waters are come in unto My soul.... The floods overflow Me." Psalm 69. It was necessary for Him to die, who had volunteered to do the will of God, thus making atonement and bearing the judgment of our sins, as our Substitute. Spiritual blessings and life eternal could only thus be brought to us, while the temporal blessings, fruit of Joseph's sufferings, enjoyed in his day, did not need it, as far as Joseph was concerned. Yet it is important to understand that all the world is benefited by the propitiation of Christ; and all benefits and blessings, temporal or spiritual, enjoyed by any, saved or unsaved, from Adam to Joseph, and on through our day and the coming age, are alone based on it. By reason of the propitiation of Christ, the sinner exists, is preserved, surrounded by a multitude of mercies, and called by the gospel to a standing in grace. How solemn and wonderful this fact of the world's indebtedness to Christ, extending to every creature in it, though only the tiniest proportion ever returns "to give glory to God."

"And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?... Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites." They lusted after his life; no credit to them that they did not take it; it answered their purpose better to barter away his body. Judah suggested the sale of his brother, which was effected for twenty pieces of silver. Judas, in after days, sold his Master at a greater price, for thirty pieces. Then they dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in the blood of a goat they killed for the purpose, and presented it to their father, thus deliberately carrying out their wicked plot to do away with Joseph and deceive his father.

To what lengths will envy and hatred not go, and what will flesh not do, if unrestrained by grace, to gain its selfish ends? Jacob at once identified the coat, and thought of the worst to account for it; he was troubled at the rumor of war (Matthew 24:6). "It is my son's coat: an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces."

What will Jacob do under these circumstances? Will he be like David, who, when told that the child was dead, "arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshiped"; and further said, "I shall go to him"? 2 Samuel 12. No, he refused to be comforted, and said, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

Jacob looked no farther than the grave, and at that only as the close of the days of mourning. David, as so constant with him, looked beyond it, to resurrection. And learning the grace, and rejoicing in it, which meets his unrighteousness, says, "My tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.

O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." Psalm 51:14, 15. God has said, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." Psalm 50:23. David did it, making his affliction brought on by his sin, the occasion of it, having learned the grace that ever abounds over sin when it is confessed. He had first said, "I acknowledge my transgression."

Jacob neither glorified God nor found a well for himself in the valley of Baca. David entered upon the joy of the morning, "I shall go to him"; the other got no farther than the season of weeping unless it were the grave, his deliverance from it. One speaks of going to the house of the Lord as a worshiper, the other of going to the grave, a mourner. Jacob had lost something that his heart was set upon on earth and, like the disciples in an after day, was "sad." They had trusted that it had been He, who now was crucified, who should have redeemed Israel, which is what they desired;

and when they were come together, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6. What did He answer them? He told them it was not for them to know the times and seasons, and led their thoughts away from that which their hearts were set upon, and which they could not possibly get, to what was to be their infinite gain and proper portion; the Holy Ghost was coming, and they should receive power, and be witnesses for Him-not "mourning" or "sad," but witnesses in power to a risen, triumphant, glorified Christ, and the grace flowing by reason of the smitten rock, from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the earth.

That which had palled their sanguine hopes in ignorance and blindness, had really brought to them far richer gain for their enjoyment, and was a necessity to the fulfillment in another day, for another people, for the lesser blessing which they had hoped for. Unbelief ever seeks to legislate for God; we see it all around, and in our hearts-it has been the history of the world. In Eden it was suggested that it would be better to have what God had withheld; and their legislation, put in practice, brought them death.

In Canaan they preferred to be like other nations, and have a king; and yielding to their wish, that they might learn the folly of their legislation, "The Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." 1 Samuel 8:7. What was the result? A long history of failure, and dishonor done to God, with only a few bright spots, entirely due to the grace that pursued them in His faithfulness and love. We hear men daily legislating for God, as to the rain and sunshine, the heat, the cold; and in our daily circumstances, how often we bring in question His providential care: does it bring peace and happiness? On the contrary, such go mourning all their days, and forecasting sorrowful events, as did Jacob with regard to Benjamin, only bringing prematurely gray heads with sorrow to the grave.

Jacob did not doubt the "mischief" which they told him had befallen Joseph, and was very ready to imagine the like for Benjamin at a future time. Thus it ever is; the heart astray from God in unbelief is a ready prey to the caprice of imagination, the lies of men, and the subtle wiles of Satan. It is "the honor of kings... to search out a matter." Proverbs 25:2. Jacob seems to have taken no trouble thus; there is no keenness of faith to discern the lie; but accepting it, and refusing the comfort, thinking only of the grave, and himself as an object surely to be pitied, thus wept for Joseph. There was nothing for God in it, though perhaps he appeared a martyr. It was unbelief, believing only what it can believe-a lie.

Joseph and His Brethren

In Genesis 39 Joseph is "brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh... bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites... and the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." Where is this that Joseph prospers, and that the Lord is said to be with him? Can it be in Egypt, the very place where his great-grandfather had lost, as to all real blessing, everything? Yes it is Egypt, the identical place and among the identical people or their successors. Then why the difference as to God's behavior toward them? This question with all its issues finds its solution in two words- "went" and "brought." Turn to chapter 12, and what do we find? "There was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there." "Joseph was brought down." It all depends on how we get into the circumstances we are found in, as to the approval or disapproval we shall meet with in them at the hand of God.

Joseph is brought down in the wisdom and goodness of God to preserve life, and God makes him to prosper, walking, like the man in the first Psalm, in uprightness, integrity, and godliness. Abram suffered loss because he was there for his own selfish ends, and to escape suffering.

We now find Joseph in prison; and surely if we did not know the sequel we should say, Joseph's day of prosperity is over now. No, it was only God moving in His mysterious way, His wonders to perform; and in the temptation God has proved His servant; and in the prison (because incarcerated there, not through his own sin, but by reason of the cruel, vindictive lies of one whose love turned to bitterest hatred when she found one more righteous than herself, and whose persistent rectitude the more disclosed her lack of it) He kept him company. The Lord was faithful, and through waves and through storms He led along, and in the prison was found with Joseph where, strange to say, he prospered still. Yes, success is certain to the obedient, for the Lord is ever with them.

Joseph does not wrestle and struggle: he can let his gentleness be known to all men, even surely to the prisoners in his care, as well as to those who had cast him there, for the Lord was at hand. (See Phil. 4:5.) How different it would have been with Joseph, had the circumstances of his prison life come about by his own sin or folly. But apart from this, two men may be in exactly the same circumstances, and their behavior be entirely different, the effect on the spirit being characterized by the way these circumstances come about, though the way in each case may be right, and even laudable.

Joseph was innocent of the crime he was charged with, and his deportment bore that mark, and the Lord was with him; and doubtless he had many quiet seasons of great refreshing, though we read not of exuberance of joy, as in other cases. The time of his imprisonment was long, but honors were conferred upon him even there; and like Uzziah, while seeking the Lord, "God made him to prosper." He, even here, is found in active service; and the man, so greatly to be honored soon, serves faithfully in his low estate.

Let us now take a peep into another prison, and learn a lesson from a man of an entirely different character. The Holy God has recorded of the impetuous Peter, in the days of his prison life, that he was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains. Blessed and timely sleep is this!

He had once slept when he ought to have watched; now he is, with unremitting care and unsleeping eye, watched over by the One with whom he had failed to watch one hour, but who had found an excuse for the failure, in the weakness of the body, while He gave him credit for all He could, saying, "The spirit truly is ready." Peter is here putting in practice what he afterward, in his epistle, presses upon others, when he speaks of "casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." The "due time" he speaks of in the previous verse for being exalted, in his case out of a very low estate, came very soon.

Surely this scene of a sleeping Peter, in such circumstances, tells us that he at least knew something of the ease of the yoke and lightness of the burden of doing the will of God. To him the words had been addressed, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me"; and the One who had said them was now active in his behalf. Peter's heart does not seem troubled, and his cares are cast on another whose pleasure it was to bear them, while the saints are soliciting, and triumphantly procuring, his release-not at the hands of man, but of Him in whom

they unfeignedly believed. Yes, they believed in an unseen Lord as much as in a visible Jesus; as they believed in God, so now they believed in Him (John 14:1). How blessed to be in such exercise and constancy of faith. Their prayers were without ceasing, though as is so often the case, there was a terrible breakdown when the answer came: "They were astonished," and said to the damsel, "Thou art mad."

A third condition of prisoner is found in Paul and Silas. Worse off apparently than all, backs bleeding and in the inner prison-doubtless a loathsome place-and their feet in the cruel stocks, but singing! Not serving like Joseph, nor sleeping like Peter, but singing at midnight!

"Joyful... in tribulation" was what characterized these prisoners, doubtless because they were brought into the circumstances by service for, and in obedience to, Christ. They had witnessed for Him, and now they rejoiced to suffer for His sake. Rectitude and negative innocence, with prosperity, characterized the prisoner Joseph. Positive service, and spiritual-not characteristic-repose was with the prisoner Peter. Positive service, and worship in the Spirit, was with Paul.

As Peter sleeping in prison affords an example for his teaching, and the blessed fruits of its practice, for he had evidently cast his deep care upon Another-precious picture of the repose and confidence of faith, portrayed too in the very one who had drawn his sword before, to gain his object, showing how grace mellows the spirit and displaces impetuous self-will-so Paul not only teaches, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," but is an example of it by his practice, as in prison he "prayed, and sang praises." Happy prisoner of the Lord then is he who can serve like Joseph, though the sphere of it be very limited; or who can sleep or repose like Peter; or sing praises like Paul till "by the skilfulness of His hands" God Himself delivers! In each of these cases before us, how manifest it is that the hand of God delivered them. "He delivered them out of their distresses." Psa. 107:6.

The interpretation of dreams, the direction and guidance of an angel, the earthquake at midnight, could alone be interventions of God. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men." But if we ask "not counsel at the mouth of the Lord," like Israel in Joshua 9, or pursue our own purpose notwithstanding God's Word crosses it, as in the days of Jehoshaphat and Ahab (2 Chron. 18), we need not look to prosper in our ways, nor for triumphant issues to our tribulations, nor hearts and lips full of praises for "His goodness and for His wonderful works." Anything other than His arm made bare for us, will surely only yield suffering intensified, difficulties multiplied, and spiritual poverty and death. How good and how excellent is the language of Asa when he "cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa.... There was exceeding much spoil." 2 Chron. 14:11, 12, 14.

Joseph and His Brethren

In Genesis 40 we get the account of the two men, the king's butler and baker, incarcerated in the same prison with Joseph, and put under his care. Coming in to them one morning, his tender

compassionate eye perceived that they were sad, and he asked them why it was. They told him they "have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." Joseph asked if interpretations do not belong to God, and requested that they tell it to him. Then the chief butler told his dream, of a vine with three branches; it budded and shot forth blossoms, and the clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in his hand, and he took the grapes, and pressed them into it, and gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. Joseph's interpretation was that the butler would be in three days restored to his butlership, and added, "But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house."

The chief baker, seeing that the interpretation was favorable, also told his dream. Truth is often only valued in such a case; the sands of fiction, sentiment, or vaunted groundless hopes being resorted to, to blind the eyes to its pursuit, when it favors not. Vain man! the thirst of truth, for right and justice, is not satiated thus. Unfavorable or favorable, its issues known or unknown, seen or unseen, truth abides the same; and if run counter to, its pursuit will surely end in the disclosure of the folly of seeking to blind the eyes to its approaching claims. The baker said, "I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head: and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bake-meats (or the work of a baker-margin) for Pharaoh: and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head." Joseph's interpretation of this was that in three days the head of the baker would be taken off, and he hung on a tree, and the birds would eat his flesh.

The ripe fruit of the butler, and the work of the baker, remind us of Cain and Abel and their offerings. Like Abel's offering, there is no human effort; the grapes are brought forth from the vine that budded, and ripe-ready for Pharaoh's cup. The "bake-meats," or "work of a baker," were the fruit of effort, like the produce of Cain's tillage. The baskets, too, were "white," or "full of holes" (margin).

Oh, how much toil and labor are expended, and only to be lost for lack of spirituality; how much sacrifice made and wasted, carrying with it untold disappointment and remorse, where if obedience had been substituted for it, which to God is so much better, what copious returns would it have yielded of richest blessings. But skill has been put in the place of faith; and the wages, dearly earned, have been put into bags with holes (Hag. 1:6) and wasted.

The birds of the air devoured the work of the baker out of the basket with holes. By works of law shall no man living be justified; it is death to try it. Faith appropriates a "ripe" and accomplished work, yielding revenues of wine to cheer the heart.

The third day, being Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast, and he restored the butler to his butlership, and the baker he hanged, according to Joseph's interpretation.

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." Well was it for Joseph that he did. Joseph was not to have his way; God's was far better, and exceeding abundantly more fraught with blessing than he could ever have asked for or thought. "Two full years" Joseph waited in prison; and we do not read of his growing weary, or impatient, or fretting over his-humanly speaking, surely, to say the least-adverse circumstances.

He was in perfect innocence as to the charge which brought him there; perhaps there were only three for many a long year cognizant of that fact- the Lord, and Joseph, and the lying woman

through whose guilt, though professing innocence and feigning rectitude, he suffered. But the Holy Ghost has revealed it now to us, and "the day" will disclose it to all.

"The LORD was with Joseph." Circumstances are no barrier to the Lord's presence with His people, be they poverty or riches, honor or shame, so long as there has been faithfulness to Him, and a good conscience retained; hence Joseph's composure and success. Paul tells us to be "satisfied with... present circumstances; for He has said, I will not leave thee" (N. Trans.), while at Philippi he provides an example of one rejoicing in apparently most adverse circumstances. They might put him in the inner prison, and make his feet fast in the stocks, but neither devil nor man could stop the flowing of that fountain of living water springing up within; and the Lord was with him. Peter, too, in Acts 5, is seen rejoicing in suffering for the sake of His name, having been beaten for his faithfulness. Everything, as we said before, depends on how we get into the circumstances we are in, as to what we suffer or enjoy while in them. Thus two men may be in the same circumstances outwardly, yet the Lord, in this sense, only be with one of them.

The Lord was for Joseph, too, as well as with him-it could not be otherwise. And though the chief butler forgot him, He did not. What a comfort it is to know that we never are in any circumstance, whether we get there rightly or wrongly, through sin, or through piety, or through faithfulness, but God if needs be has ever got a right and a triumphant way out of it. It will call for self-judgment and confession, if it is through sin; much patience and waiting upon God in either case; but it is written for every trial, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. 10:13. If we do thus wait for Him, He leads in triumph, and none can stay His hand.

Joseph waited-"two full years" he waited, and like the blessed One of Psalm 40, when the right moment came, he could say, "I waited patiently for the LORD, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit...Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD his trust."

Had Joseph got his way when he made the request of the butler, all very likely that he would have gained as the result of such intercession on his behalf, would have been restoration to the place that he had lost, and most probably not so much as that; but when God's time came, he was brought forth from prison to sit among princes.

Little do we know how much we often lose because of our natural activity and readiness to resort to some expedient of our own, when we miss the incomparable blessedness of being fed by the "integrity of His heart," and guided by the "skilfulness of His hand." Peter, with all his activity and zeal, could never have achieved anything nearly so wonderful as what took place for him when he was absolutely powerless and unable to put in practice any plan of his ever-ready invention. But this condition of helplessness made him a fit subject for the benefits of a far more skilful hand; and a greater manifestation of power, as to his temporal need, was exercised at such a time and in such a state, than ever, I should say, before. It was God's opportunity; He could bring in His resources now that Peter had none.

For such opportunities, I believe, God often waits, and often waits in vain; we fill them up ourselves, and the desired result is very hardly, if at all, acquired, and certainly not with the heart and mouth full of worship, for it generally costs leanness and barrenness of soul, disqualifying for

all worship.

See that man in Acts 3, absolutely powerless in his crippled state, and no human device could effect a cure for the disease that had withstood the efforts of forty years-man's full testing time- but now entering the temple, leaping and praising God-a real worshiper. All he possessed, he had received; his cup was full-grace, pure grace alone, had filled it. And he was made-what nothing else but grace can make-a worshiper!

Pharaoh dreamed; and the butler remembered his fault, in the forgetfulness of his benefactor two years before. No one having been found able to interpret the dreams, Joseph came to the chief butler's memory; and "Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon"; and he who had been Pharaoh's prisoner was almost immediately found Pharaoh's counselor, and exchanged the dungeon for the "second chariot," and the faithful rule of the prison, for governor "over all the land of Egypt." "And they cried before him, Bow the knee."

Are we not often very foolish in the things for which we wish and sometimes make request? And do we not often seek, and sometimes even make, untimely escapes out of circumstances not quite pleasant, or what we deem hurtful, or profitless? Such ways only add to our troubles, and hinder Him whose eye is never unwatchful, or hand resourceless, and whose way with us is ever in blessing. May this knowledge inspire in each of us increased confidence and patience. Joseph's way might have led to deliverance from prison, and there ended; God's way led not only from suffering, but to greatest honor.

Pharaoh decked Joseph with his own ring, vesture of fine linen, and a gold chain about his neck, and gave him Asenath, daughter of Potipherah priest of On, to wife, to share his dignities and honors. The pit and prison were his lot alone Asenath was not with him there. So it is said of Christ, "He was taken from prison... He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Isa. 53:8, 12. He suffered alone. The Church, and Israel by-and-by, will share with Him the spoil. In His shame, the mocking, buffeting, spitting, and nailing to that cross, He suffered all alone-we had no part in that-yea, He suffered thus to spare us from it, whose due it was. He was the only One who could pass under the judgment of God and come out of it having settled its every claim. There is escape for none who get there, and no avoidance of it but by the One who voluntarily took the place in substitution for those who accept Him thus.

The Lord give our hearts to worship more and more, in such boundless love as this, and to rejoice in the marvelous place that grace has set us in, and appropriate the untold advantages and blessings that are ours as we take our Asenath place beside our risen and triumphant Joseph. "All are yours"- "Ye are Christ's." 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. The value, too, is enhanced a thousandfold, as we remember all it cost Him to obtain it for us. And it was not mercy only-it was love! love that was strong as death, which led Him through it to obtain the objects of it, clearing them from every charge that could be brought against them, and enriching them and gracing them suitably to the place and dignity it was the purpose and affection of His heart to set them in.

It is precious to us, and surely gratifying to Christ, to entertain the consciousness in our hearts of what we are to Christ. What He is consciously to us, is no measure for this. In Ephesians 5 we are told He "loved" and He "gave." What He gave is the measure of the love-justice claimed all-"Himself." Love yielded it; He "gave Himself." The same love occupies itself now on its precious

objects which it nourishes and cherishes, till the day of the consummation of His ways with us, of infinite love and grace, arrives, and He fully gratifies His own heart's desires and affection by presenting to Himself the object He loved-died for-and ever since has occupied Himself about

Joseph and His Brethren

"And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come... and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread." Gen. 41:53, 54. Why was it there was bread in Egypt? Joseph was there! The bountiful fruit of Jehovah's hand during those seven years of plenty might have been wasted had not Joseph been resorted to, and his counsel followed. But presently the land of Egypt grew "famished," and the people "cried to Pharaoh."

May the Lord press home, dear reader, on your heart and mine, three words in Pharaoh's reply to those Egyptians. May they ring in our ears in each hour of need, and as a word from the Lord find a ready response, and prove our only resource. Pharaoh said to all who in trouble came, "Go unto Joseph." There was only one in all the land of Egypt who could satisfy those hungry souls with bread-that one was Joseph! The man, as in resurrection, had resources at his command capable of meeting the demands of all; and Pharaoh gave them title to make these demands. The Lord encourage our hearts in this. Is there a thing your soul has need of? "Go unto Joseph." Visit your neighbor in his time of sickness, poverty, perplexity, and trial, and whisper in his ear to "Go unto Joseph." Nothing is too hard for Christ, no demand too great for Him to meet, no desire (if according to His will) too trivial for Him to take all pains to gratify. It is God's delight, as He is also "able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." 2 Cor. 9:8.

How foolish, with such authority and encouragement as these Egyptians had, would they have been had they not gone to Joseph for the bread they needed! Then why such sadness, over carefulness, perplexity, and misgivings, in those who have far more than equal title, more numerous and varying claims, and a vastly superior Benefactor who loves, not merely pities, the objects of His care, and has said, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it"?

What Egyptian would have thought of going to anyone save Joseph, when Pharaoh's word was, "Go unto Joseph"? We have often proved far more foolish, and fallen back on self, where only disappointment has always met us; or on some arm of flesh, the language of which, in effect, has ever been, though still we trusted it, the language of the king of Samaria to that poor dejected woman, "Whence shall I help thee?" implying that to seek it of him was altogether futile. "If the Lord do not help thee whence shall I help thee?" Where is the arm of flesh that can? The Lord help us to "Go unto Joseph." Let us make it our daily practice from early morn, before our busy brains begin to plan the occupations for the day, to the latest minute of our conscious hours, preceding every new arrangement, or the putting in practice some already worked out project, to go to Christ. It is the only way for His servants to do His will and serve effectually. It takes not necessarily long to do; yea, our Joseph can be resorted to, as in Nehemiah's case, in so short a time as the interval that elapses between the asking of a question and the giving of an answer; "The king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king." Neh. 2:4, 5. What pleasure, too, does it afford to go to our ever so accessible Friend and Master, leaving our failures and our successes with Him, and returning with all the cheer, help, and

refreshment, His presence yields. Oh! there is nothing like it; may the Lord help us more continually to "Go unto Joseph."

But then there was to be obedience; "What he saith to you, do." How often we want to obtain the blessings Christ has for us, and adopt our own way about them. How despondent, too, we often are because we do not get the answer to our wish, just our way and at our time. Pharaoh implied that Joseph might have something to say to them before they got the bread, and that they would have to "do" what he said, as well as receive the blessing. So the Lord often has to say to us, and often bid us "do," before His grace is free in righteousness to flow; cleansing and obedience in Isaiah 1:18, 19 precede eating the good of the land. It often happens that we have to part with something that we most cherish in our poverty, like the Egyptians in chapter 47, before He is free to minister and make us really rich.

We are told to "buy the truth"; in Paul's case he suffered the loss of all for the sake and furtherance of it. Truth that we really get is pretty sure to have cost us something in the getting of it; we have suffered loss-the loss, perhaps, of something that we prized-for the obtaining of that which, when acquired, gave us to pour contempt on what we prized, yet forfeited. The Egyptians bought and, of course, retained no longer that with which they bought-they soon spent all! The purchase of a loaf costs us its value; we cannot retain the money, and obtain the loaf. The Lord teach us what it means to "buy the truth," and also help us keep it. We are exhorted not to "sell it"-sad possibility-woeful calamity-thus to part with what is real and of inestimable value for what is vanity, and yields vexation. This is often done.

Obedience and blessing never part company; there will never be the one without the other. Obedience ensures the presence of God. Christ said, "He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." John 8:29. And again, in chapter 14, "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do." May we, as a people "elect... unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," obeying as Christ obeyed-the responsive outflow of what we are-be found thus walking; to "do" whatever He says, that He may freely give, and, as we take the benefit conferred, own that it was grace from first to last that brought it to us. The asking anything, and keeping His commandments, go hand in hand in John 14:14, 15. The desire of faith, that was accompanied with an obedient heart and an empty hand, was never yet repelled.

"When Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons... get you down thither, and buy for us from thence... Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt." Benjamin was left behind. "Joseph was the governor over the land." The youth that a few years before had been branded with the direst calumny that malice could invent, and the prisoner of Egypt's dungeon, was now seen as Egypt's lord and governor. His way to honor, power, and glory, surely lay along a rugged road akin to His, that blessed One, on whom was heaped all the cruel fruits of envy, hatred, jealousy, and malice, who stood for judgment, God incarnate! but who "because He is the Son of man," is appointed Judge of all the world.

The One who shall presently have the government upon His shoulders, once bore the cross upon them, and stood, gorgeously and impiously arrayed, in mockery, falsely accused and unjustly condemned before governors on earth. But grace was there, abounding over all the sin; it was to save the nation, as Caiaphas the high priest said, "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." John 11:50. The full answer to this will come

when that which was His accusation once to prove Him false (John 19:21) is manifestly proved the truth, bringing His accusers and murderers, for whom He made intercession, into richest blessing on the earth.

A remnant of that nation who crucified their king will reap rich harvests, like Joseph's brethren, through the grace that so much more abounds over the abounding sin, and which finds in the occasion of their greatest folly, calamity, and guilt, the opportunity for forming divine titles for those who had forfeited their all-not to the fulfillment of some forlorn or even sanguine hopes of theirs, but to the enjoyment of all the thoughts and fruits of love and grace that were in His heart for them, and which alone could be brought to them by His baring His own bosom to the wound inflicted by divine justice, and thus bearing the judgment they deserved.

Oh, it was love-unbounded love-the love of a single eye that left not God out, as Joseph thinks not of his brethren's cruelty, but said, "God meant it unto good." So Christ finds rest in the welfare of others after crossing those boisterous billows; and having shown them His hands and His feet, wounded in the house of His friends, says, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name." "God meant it unto good."

"Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them." These men were, be it remembered, guilty men-guilty of the foulest of crimes, and murderers in heart. But Joseph loved them-they were his brethren-and he yearned to make himself known to them, but could not do it in their present state; their consciences must first be reached. This is indeed a patient work with Joseph. Nature would suggest an immediate shower of invective and threats of vengeance; but this would only frighten and, if executed, leave the heart and conscience still more callous than before. Joseph possessed his soul while he spoke "roughly" with his lips. It was the roughness of love; any other character of love would have been out of place-indeed, not really love at all-and to make himself "strange" was the effect of such a love to those in such a state. Aught else would only have been weak and human kindness, and in its results totally barren of all that Joseph yearned to see produced. They "bowed down themselves before him," because he was the governor. But this partial answer to his dreams was not enough to cause him to commit himself unto them; he knew their state, and what was in them. It is written of Christ, He "did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all." But there was a man in the next chapter (John 3) whose conscience had been reached, to whom He unfolded the love of God. So with Joseph-their consciences reached and righted, he could express the love that filled his heart. But it was the same love that "roughly" spoke before, that presently was marked with the most gentle touches of deep affection, and flowed profusely in manifest, richest blessing.

Doubtless Joseph's brethren did not like the roughness any more than Joseph liked to use it, but it was salutary and necessary for them; so he choked the tender emotions of his heart to display that which gratified him less but was for their gain. "God is light" and "God is love." As light, He makes manifest all evil. Known only thus, the world would be left in blank despair, doomed to irrevocable judgment, without a single ray of hope to margin the cloud-the death pall enshrouding everything and everyone. But "God is love"! Oh, wondrous tidings! Relief-deliverance from all fear of judgment, all that the light reveals fully met and adequately atoned for. But more, far more! The One through whom all this is brought to us, uttered words on that night ere His betrayal that speak

volumes to our hearts. Just listen to them: "Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Here is an account opened up for Him and by Him, in which He lets us men for whom He suffered participate in fullest measure. God has been glorified in Him; and we become, in practical enjoyment, the objects of His eternal love and favor. The incense has filled the holy place (Lev. 16:13)- the fragrance of His Person. God is glorified in Him, and His love flows in exhaustless rivers of unmingled blessing.

Oh, who has not felt the roughness, who needed to be convicted of our sin when in "a far country" with the husks, and amid swine? But what a welcome! what a home! what a banquet! the love had provided them when the light had revealed our darkness and guilt, and the roughness had made us fear because we were not in a state to love. How gladly now we kiss the rod which we did not like, and bow before the One who appointed it, and own the wisdom, tenderness, and grace of all His ways. Yes, it was love that told us what we were, and that all our religiousness which, because it had not Christ for an object, only inflated us with pride, and was most obnoxious to Him. But we did not like that sort of love till we were thoroughly exposed before Him, and we found, like Joseph's brethren, that we were in the presence of One who knew us through and through, and all our history, and the sin and misery we were in, though it was gilded over with a false pretense of truth and uprightness.

Surely we have here a wonderful and vivid picture of God's dealings with His people, not only when they were strangers to His grace, but when they have known it, but through carelessness, neglect, or sin, lost the sense of it. With tenderness, patience, and mercy, He passes them through paths of suffering and hardness, in order to bless them. Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other at the cross. But how we see the counterpart of this in God's dealings with His people. The mercy and peace are there waiting for the appropriation and enjoyment of every ready soul where the answered claims of truth and righteousness have prepared the way for their enjoyment. What patience Joseph displayed, too, and what pains he took to reach and exercise their consciences! What a tale it is-the famine, two journeys from Canaan to Egypt, the sacks with the money and the cup, and the retaining of Simeon, and much more.

Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren, yet never did he love them more, if indeed his absence from them had not made his heart grow fonder. Ardent affection was burning in his heart for them, but the time for its display was not yet come; it must be suppressed till it could flow so that the objects of it could receive it and its benefits untarnished by the bitterness of undiscovered sin, and the pangs of a guilty conscience that would not be quieted.

How did these men come to Joseph-murderers in heart and liars that they were? They styled themselves "true men," and disdained the thought of being "spies," though in the same breath they say, "One is not," meaning Joseph whom they had sold. This, then, is the secret of Joseph's roughness-not the lack of love, but the wisdom of it-an abounding love that cleared the way for a permanent benefit, and more agreeable expression of it. Joseph's way is God's way ever; He reaches the heart by the conscience. Heart work without conscience work will never be permanent. It is like the seed on the rock-there is joy, but no root, and presently (and necessarily) a falling away. I think we find the spring of all these wonderful ways of Joseph with his brethren in three little words in Genesis 42:18-"I fear God." It is a holy, blessed fear, answering in character to

the fear of Hebrews 12 where we are exhorted to "have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." Solomon also tells us that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Prov.

1:7. Cornelius, the man so richly blessed in Acts 10, "feared God with all his house." Where this proper holy fear is, there is sure to be blessing, and it is such that are invoked to worship in Revelation 19:5: "Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great." Of Israel it is said, in her day of future blessing, "Thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged." Isa 60:5.

Joseph and His Brethren

Joseph, the man so greatly honored at the end, could well say, "I fear God," for it was what had characterized him all his life, and was only the echo of his first recorded words spoken in Egypt when he met the tempter with "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. 39:9. Joseph's brethren thoroughly lacked this kind of fear; Joseph sought to create it. They were boldly protesting their faithfulness-that they were true men-and pleading innocence to such a gross charge as being "spies". He told them that he feared God, bringing them into His presence who is light, and their darkness was immediately revealed, their consciences reached, and real fruit produced. What a change! What a contrast! "We are true men" is the language of Genesis 42:11; "We are verily guilty" is the confession of verse 21. Greater extremes there could not be-"true," or "guilty"-it is God being brought in that made the difference. What a state was theirs! Conscience awakened and reproving, and one of themselves soon found reproaching-"Reuben answered... Spake I not unto you saying, Do not sin against the child?" And matters would only grow worse till all was out in the presence of Joseph. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"; but before there is communion, the sins or failures must be admitted or confessed. These men had to do with one who knew their history and sin; but they knew nothing of communion with him till their consciences were reached, and he had revealed himself, then all their sin being admitted, they were forgiven.

Bad consciences made cowards of these wretched men! Their asses were laden with corn, and provision was given them for the way; but in stopping to give their asses provender at an inn, one spied his money in his sack, and exclaimed, "My money is restored." Had they been "true men," according to their own boasted character surely they would have found in this a cause for joy and thankfulness; certainly full sacks and money returned was no honest cause for producing hearts and tongues like theirs. We read, "Their hearts failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?" Here we get the other kind of fear. It is not the fear of God that Joseph had. Their fear was the fear of a bad conscience. They feared because they were offenders; he feared lest he should offend. Theirs was the fear of distance and estrangement from God; his was the fear of nearness enjoyed, and communion too much valued to be lightly treated. Theirs was the fear of judgment; his had a quality in perfect conformity with the favor in which he stood. Those that saw that great light when Paul was smitten down on his way to Damascus were afraid when they saw it, while a holy fear filled Paul's soul as he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22). Such is the sinner's and the Christian's

fear!-the fear of distance and the fear of nearness, the fear that keeps us away from God, and the fear that brings us nigh. May God increase this reverential fear in all His own who know nearness, and want to keep it in all its sweet enjoyment.

But though their fear was so different from that of Joseph's, yet he would have rejoiced to see godly fear produced in them. To this end he was toiling, and the agony of their souls at this display of the bountifulness of his love and grace would have been an adequate reward. He had been wounding them, but they were "the wounds of a friend" that he gave them, and much better than kisses, while they were in such a state. It was the divine tact of his patient serving. He wisely wounded that such a cure might be effected that would leave them forever thankful for the wound. The process seemed long, but it was the only one likely to be effectual. A foolish and inefficient fisherman will dash at his prey and drive it away; the skillful and successful will display long patience and silent tact. The Lord help us, whether it be with our failing brethren, to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness"; or with poor sinners, to win them wisely, for "he that winneth souls is wise".

Nature might have suggested one of two other courses to Joseph. Self-vindication would have prompted him to tell them how bad they were; and that he was their brother whom they put in a pit and afterward sold; and now that he had the pre-eminence as he had dreamed, he would exercise it in their destruction. Nature might have wrought in its character. Displaying nothing but honey; Joseph's heart would have discharged itself of the affection burning in it, regardless of the unfitness for its reception, and left them in a state ten times worse than it was before, and much harder to be cured. No; it is "salt" that is "good," not honey; and what it affects it also preserves. Had Joseph dealt with his brethren in the first manner stated, in anger and judgment, with no grace, instead of there being produced the "fear of God," it would have only produced "the fear of man"; and that we are told "bringeth a snare"; and "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." James 1:20. So-called love displayed at the expense of truth, where wrong remains unchallenged and unconfessed is only an amiability which reflects discredit on its possessor at every expression of it. Joseph was not going to make for peace at the expense of righteousness.

There can be no real peace which has not a basis of righteousness and truth. Melchisedec was "first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace." Heb. 7:2. We are living in a day of marvelous grace; but it is grace reigning "through righteousness," and that because, in the cross, "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." Isa. 32:17.

This part of Joseph's history is a lesson of deepest importance in this day of looseness, and a real feast as one discovers Christ in the picture- though every picture can only be a meager representation of Christ. Yet the moral dignity of Joseph is grand to a degree. Malice and violence would have been most weak, unmanly, and ungodlike, in their present low estate; but in those three words, "I fear God," there was real moral power.

In this blessed, wondrous picture we see the outlines of many a case of discipline through which a greater than Joseph, with perfect mercy and skill, leads His people, in order to create, where it is lacking, the fear He so much appreciates. Yet how often do we fail to own whose hand it is that

shakes the "sieve" of discipline (Amos 7:9), and which will not let the least grain fall upon the earth, in order to deliver from the "fan" of judgment which would "bereave" and "destroy" (Jer. 15:7). He never unnecessarily afflicts, and He prayed for Peter whom He disciplined. A curse is pronounced upon the man "whose heart departeth from the Lord," and surely this is ever where the fear of God is lacking. "He shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness." Jer. 17:5,6.

How the lack of this holy fear of God deprives of all present gain; and human reason-the carnal mind allowed to work-is the first step to its displacement. The fool says, "There is no God," but the greater fool is he who practically disowns the truth to which he verbally assents. It is nothing less than infidelity in principle to talk of God and yet live as though He were not. The effect of this lack is the allowance of practices, plans, and inventions which are on a level with the world, if not below it. Actions become compatible with beliefs and, of course, the fear of God is hardly to be expected there.

The "fear of God" is the Christian's road to truest gain and is the fulfillment of the hope taught by the Spirit. All we need to meet the difficulties we find along that road is faith in exercise (perhaps mainly through trials) that owns there is a God. If we let this go, then the road that I have named "the fear of God" is immediately lost and we find instead another we may name "the fear of men or circumstances." There unbelief works, schemes and plans, and yields an abundant treasure of sorrow, disappointment, and endless remorse.

Mary's prophetic language was: "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation." Luke 1:50. His ears hearken to those to whom Malachi refers, who "feared the Lord and spake often one to another: and the Lord harkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name." Mal. 3:16.

In Luke 12 we are told to "fear him," and to "fear not" (vv. 5,7). We are of more value than many sparrows. Why then should we be fearful of circumstances when caring for us is the same One whose hand provides for the sparrows, five of which are sold for two farthings (one alone is too worthless to measure its value) and "not one of them is forgotten before God"? The Lord forewarns whom men are to fear-"fear Him....yea, I say unto you, Fear Him."

This fear seems to be one of the first manifested instincts of the divine nature; and it is beautiful to see it displayed in such a vessel as the thief upon the cross. This malefactor rebuked his comrade, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" It is evident that he did, and in the next breath owned Jesus "Lord"- "Lord, remember me."

But returning to Joseph's brethren, we marvel their language in Gen. 42:28. Their sacks were filled, their money returned, yet they exclaimed when one was opened, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" It is the language of fear, calamity, and woe, out of place even in the day of adversity and yet found in the midst of unexpected plenty. It was their wretched, guilty conscience that made them miserable in the presence of that which might have made them glad.

They passed on to Jacob their father, and told their story, and when the sacks were opened in his presence, and "they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid." Jacob manifested the same character here that was so common with him. He was full of fear, unbelief, and forebodings of calamity. As he had once found satisfaction in his own invention of an evil

beast devouring Joseph, to account for the blood upon the coat, so now already his unbelief suggests, "Simeon is not," and mischief may befall Benjamin by the way. "All these things are against me" now; and if his "ifs" of unbelief are fulfilled-for unbelief often carries with it a wretched self-made martyr or morbid spirit which only feeds upon itself-his gray hairs would be brought down with sorrow to the grave. Poor Jacob! When these things came to him, did he pray? No. Did he rejoice in the midst of his tribulation? No. Was his language toward God at all? Did he say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"? No. Did he make the valley of Baca a well? No. "All these things rare against me," is his woeful cry; he did not see the hand of God in any of it, and it was true of him, as of his posterity, of whom it is recorded, "They have not known My ways." Heb. 3:10. God was working in all these things for that end which presently made Jacob weep for joy; and then if he looked back, what a waste must have met his view! He would feel the remorse of lost opportunities for glorifying God as each trial or sorrow arose, because he met it with repining instead of meeting it with all its excellent fruits. All that 'he had done had only tended to hinder; certainly not to accelerate, the fulfillment of God's purpose.

Joseph and His Brethren

In Genesis 43 the carnal mind was at work again, scheming and planning, doing this, and taking that. Joseph was still in rejection; they knew him not. Famine drove them again to Egypt, for it was "sore in the land." But first there was a little battle between Jacob and his sons as to Benjamin going with them; they argued, "The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Jacob reproached them with what seemed to be idle words: "Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?" Now these words could not alter circumstances, but unbelief is always wordy and full of reasoning. Then a scheme was adopted to appease the wrath that unbelief expected, or to remove difficulties, or secure the safe return of Benjamin. It was Cain's line of things over again-doing for that which grace alone can bring, and "double money" taken for that which can only be procured without money and without price. The grace of Joseph is accounted for as an "oversight" and therefore to be returned.

Having arrived in Egypt with their "present" and "double money," they stood before Joseph, whose eyes lit upon Benjamin; and he ordered his course accordingly. Their present, the fruit of their doings, was apparently disregarded. They gave it to him at noon, but his thoughts were otherwise engaged, and all was silent as to his receiving it. Joseph ordered the ruler of his house to bring the men home, to slay cattle and make ready, for they should dine with him at noon. So the man brought them into Joseph's house.

Were they happy in such a favored spot? They were in circumstances that might well have fulfilled the greatest hope of many an Egyptian noble who never lived to see it realized. No; it was the same old story; their feelings always answered to their state. They had not cleared themselves, and the fortune of their circumstances did not remove their fears. "The men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house." And now being afraid, what will they do? Will they quietly wait and say with the Psalmist, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee"? Psalm 56:3. No, they occupied themselves with working out a reason for what they were passing through, and finding no time or inclination to judge themselves, they judged Joseph, saying that he was seeking occasion against them, to fall upon them, and to take them for bondmen, and their asses.

Then they told all the story of the sacks and money to the steward, who, though probably an Egyptian, had evidently learned, perhaps from Joseph, more of God and His goodness than these, the seed of Israel, appeared to know. His language was blessed, and like Joseph when he uttered those three words, "I fear God," so the steward brought them again into the presence of God. The holy God whom Joseph feared, was the God in blessing whom the steward owned and of whom he reminded the sons of Jacob with emphasis as peculiarly theirs. "He said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them."

When Joseph returned at noon, they brought their present to him, "and bowed themselves to him to the earth." Joseph then asked of the welfare of their father; and they bowed down and made "obeisance" to him, according to his dream in chapter 37:7. "And he (Joseph) lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there"; then "they drank, and were merry with him." Yes, they were merry with him; the feast and the wine had for the moment changed their state of fear and humility for that of merriment. How different the merriment in Luke 15. It is the father there who says, "It was meet that we should make merry"-language that Joseph could not utter. In Luke it is lasting, for it is well founded on confession and forgiveness, and ratified in the blood of the calf. Here it is only a covering over, and it soon gave place to fears, and a desire to "clear" themselves.

With God's things, all that is badly done must be undone at some time or other; a rent patched up, a flaw glossed over, will never do. Joseph had not called forth the merriment; things looked smooth, but their shamelessness must be discovered, for Joseph had blessing for them.

Joseph put in practice somewhat sterner measures to effect that which he so much longed to see. He commanded the steward to fill the men's sacks, to put their money in them, and to put his silver cup in the sack of the youngest. As soon as morning was light they were sent away, and their asses.

"And when they were gone out of the city... Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing." So he overtook them, and thus spoke. They replied, "Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing." Then they told of their wonderful righteousness in taking back the money-and how should they steal silver or gold in this way? They did not recognize that they still had the same covetous, natural hearts by which they had robbed their father of his son and had sold him for twenty pieces of silver! They were stout in their denunciation of such a charge and offered the life of the one with whom it would be found and the service as bondmen of the rest. When search was made, the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. So they rent their clothes, loaded their asses, returned to the city, and fell before Joseph who was still in the house. He asked them what they had done-"Wot ye not that such a man as I can surely divine?" They knew not what to say nor how to clear themselves. They admitted that God had found out their iniquity, and all offered to be Joseph's servants. This he declined, but said that the one with whom the cup was found should be his servant. Then they repeated the story of

what they had said to him on their previous visit to Egypt, what they had said to Jacob, and what he had said to them; and Judah finished by saying, "How shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

In chapter 45 we get the touching story of Joseph making himself known to his brethren. He did it in secret, first causing every man to go out. He did not brandish abroad their sin and shame (the revealing of himself was the revelation of all their guilt); he did it in secret. The disciples were not present in John 4 when the Lord revealed the woman's sins, and in chapter 8 the accusers had departed before the Lord charged the woman there to "go, and sin no more." How much suffering would be saved if the love which Joseph and the Lord displayed, which covers a multitude of sins-yet rightly exposes them when needed- were more in practice!

"Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" The question got no answer. It was the same old story; they were troubled again, "troubled at his presence, too troubled to answer. They were troubled when they got the money back in their sacks. They were troubled when they were taken into Joseph's house. Now they were troubled in their long-lost, loving brother's presence. Each occasion might well have been an occasion of greatest pleasure. There was only one reason for it all-a guilty conscience! Joseph had revealed himself and revealed their darkness and distance from him and from God. But this was not enough; their case would indeed be bad if left like this. "Perfect love casteth out fear," and the service of love is not completed till this is done. It is questionable whether these men were ever "made perfect in love," for long after, this fear again arose in their hearts. But this was not Joseph's fault; not the fault of the reconciler, but the reconciled, though, of course, Joseph was only human after all.

Blessed be God! We have to do with a divine Person and a reconciliation based on a divine foundation. By reason of this the love flows, and fear, where the love is intelligently known, is necessarily dispelled. Law and fear could never be divorced, neither can love and fear be reconciled, except it be that holy, pious fear which is proper to the love, which its presence ever only magnifies, and which is by all means to be cultivated.

The tidings, "I am Joseph," carried terror to their hearts. He spoke again, "Come near to me, I pray you," and confidence took the place of fear and trouble. "They came near"; and in this state and place of nearness he found a fitting opportunity to remind them of how they had sold him, their brother, into Egypt. He assured them of his love, then wounded them to reach their consciences. But, because all was fully out, he healed the wound, bade them not to be grieved, and introduced God into the scene as being over all their cruel ways with him. At the same time-and how grand the divine contact here-he gave them credit for being angry with themselves. He said, "Be not... angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."

Israel, his brethren, Egypt, and the world were all preserved in life through Joseph, and thus he was pleased to account for all their treatment of him. The Lord said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And again, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." John 12:24, 32. It was necessary for Him to die; yet, because of his death the world is convicted of sin. righteousness, and judgment to come by the Holy Ghost (John 16). The very ground of judgment becomes the ground for pardon and blessing, where there is faith. "God meant it unto good." God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. In Joseph's case, the subject of the wrath became the minister of blessing even to those who

inflicted the cruel tokens of the wrath.

Nothing brought such praise and glory to Joseph as that which was occasioned by his brethren's wrath. Nothing ever brought such glory to God as that which was occasioned by the sin expressed in the wrath of man against God's beloved Son, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

How complete is the deliverance wrought out by Joseph! It was not only "a great deliverance," as he called it in verse 7, but he spoke in verse 11 of nourishing those he had delivered. It is "forgiveness of sins, and inheritance" (Acts 26:18). The debt was paid and a fortune was given. But where was this fortune to be enjoyed? He said, "Thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen... near unto me." They had been brought near at first (v. 4), and his thought was that they enjoy an abiding nearness, enhancing surely to them the value of the fortune.

The Lord says of His brethren in Jeremiah 32:41, 42, "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul. For thus saith the Lord; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them." It is Joseph's roughness in order that the good that he had purposed should follow. Our salvation, if only from judgment, would indeed be "great," "a great deliverance"; but how much greater is the infinite gain that is ours in that the One who delivered us by dying now nourishes us in life. Joseph had passed through death in figure, and it had saved them; now their life, safety, and fortune were dependent on him in life. As He lived and prospered, they lived and prospered also. If we have been reconciled by the death of God's Son when enemies, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom. 5:10). And we live on account of Him (John 6:57). He has delivered us by death, from death; He nourishes us in life by living for us. He has brought us nigh and given us to know that it gratifies Him to have us there. It is His will and pleasure, too, that we should be where He is in very fact; and to this end, did Joseph place "his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses." Gen. 47:11. So the Lord Himself shall come and take us and place us where He is in the place He has gone before us to prepare. Such is His heart that, like Joseph, nothing but the best suits in His esteem the objects of His love and care.

What a loss it would be if deliverance were all and this great gain were not in prospect for us! Yet how many a soul never seems to get beyond the deliverance! Joseph spoke to his brethren of their deliverance, their nourishment and their prospects. May the Lord give us to hear and love His voice as He speaks to us of all three. The Shepherd who dies to deliver in Psalm 22 nourishes as He leads in green pastures in Psalm 23 and speaks of prospects and future blessing in Psalm 24.

Joseph and His Brethren

Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brethren had arrived in Egypt, "and it pleased Pharaoh well." "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land... and the children of Israel did so."

Joseph gave them "provision for the way," and a parting exhortation, "See that ye fall not out by the way." This seems rather a remarkable exhortation, and ungrounded and out of place, if he had

not known their hearts. Now that he had reconciled them to himself, who once hated him so bitterly and treated him so cruelly, he knew their danger lay in that they might fall out among themselves.

He had known what it was for anger, malice, and jealousy to separate between himself and them, and now his desire was that the same thing might not be found among themselves. There was no fear of falling out among themselves while in his presence, for his presence occupied and kept them, though his keen perception had doubtless observed the rising of it in Reuben's reproach in chapter 42:22. Their danger was, that when absent from him they would forget him and the grace that had abounded over their sin. Then, failing to see the beams in their own eyes, they would set to work at the fruitless task of casting out the motes in their brethren's eyes.

God forbid that we should be so indifferent and so lacking in spiritual insight, as not to see the motes or beams in our brother's eye when they are there to be seen, for we cannot assist in the deliverance from them unless we see them. Neither let our love be of such a quality that we notice them but let them pass uncorrected or unchallenged, for correction is one of the most blessed exhibitions of love, when done in the spirit of meekness. The Lord grant us grace that it rarely" never be done in the spirit that accords with "falling out." We are exhorted (and may it be more constantly before each of us) as far as depends on you, to live at peace with all men. Romans 12:18-JND Translation. This is not easy, but He who has given the exhortation has given also "provision for the way" for its accomplishment.

When Joseph's brethren arrived in Canaan, they told their father that Joseph was yet alive and that he was governor over all the land of Egypt. "And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." He always seemed to disbelieve the good and to believe the bad, and to surmise bad where there was not certainty of good. The young selfish supplanter, at the expense of others, had grown up into the old man reaping a full harvest of what he had sown.

Whether it be success or failure for the present that attends our faithless schemes and plots, it is worth little when compared with the effect such practices have upon the spirit in future suffering. Jacob's early sorrowful history in which Rebekah his mother so much figured bore marks never to be effaced on earth. He had acted as if there were no God, though he was loved by Him before he was born. (Romans 9) Now that he was old, he seemed unable to credit God with good, or to trace His hand in blessing, or to enjoy the sweet repose, so gratifying to old age, which is the fruit of confidence in the heart and hand of God-learned in all the varying circumstances of life.

"When he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived." "When he saw." Nothing but seeing was believing with Jacob; when he saw he believed, saying, "Joseph my son is yet alive." Sight produces resolution too: "I will go and see him;" and "Israel took his journey." When he "saw," and not till then did he say, "It is enough."

We do not read of Jacob praying when the famine came, but we do read what he did when he saw that there was corn in Egypt (Gen. 42:1). It is the language of the doubting Thomas, in John 20: "Except I shall see in His hands... I will not believe." Jesus appeared a second time, when Thomas was present, and His gentle rebuke upon Thomas' confession of Him then was, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Sight does not call for faith, and its only advantages are present things. Faith is 'far more excellent; it is the substantiating of things hoped for. Hebrews 11:1-JND Translation. The world goes on the principle of sight; it knows nothing better; the present

is its gain. The Christian lives and walks by faith, with the brightest hopes to buoy him over the adverse currents of the present and leave him always rejoicing.

In Genesis 47 Joseph brought his father into the presence of Pharaoh, who asked him his age. The reply was sad indeed—a pitiful whine, totally devoid of a single chord for God. It was the story of evil days which would appear to have had no ray of sunshine for Jacob's memory. He had forgotten, or was too much self-occupied to think of that blessed hour when, on the way to Haran with stones for his pillow, God had brought before the unconscious Jacob the ladder, the angels, and the promise, and how he had called it the "house of God," "the gate of heaven." It was a wonderful revelation, though he spoiled the blessing of it to his soul by his vow and by his bargain; he was ignorant of grace.

Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and departed. How different is the language of Paul in Acts 20 where he says, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, having testified of the grace of God." At the end he finished his course with exultation, saying, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7), and looks forward to the loved appearing of His Lord. It is such a contrast to Jacob who counted his life so dear, so short, and finished it, not with joy but with groans and sorrow—without a word of the grace which always abounded over him. How often is our language much the same, always counting the so-called "evil" of the days or years, instead of boasting in the grace that has faithfully pursued us!

A third circle was brought into blessing round Joseph in Genesis 47. The circles became narrower as they became more intimate. None can question that of all the recipients of Joseph's favors, beneficence, and love, Asenath, his wife, was first. Nearer and dearer and smaller this circle, if such I may call it, could not be. Her place was unique, without fear of rival. As we said before, she had not suffered with him, but she certainly shared the spoil. His suffering and reward were both her gain though she only participated in the latter; and of all the objects of Joseph's love and care, she, though little spoken of, we doubt not, was pre-eminent.

Joseph's brethren came next—a larger circle, though barely numbering seventy. These he dearly loved, suffered for, reconciled, and enriched. This circle answers to Christ's brethren after the flesh, who, like John the Baptist, shall rejoice to hear the Bridegroom's voice (John 3:29). Once they had no thought of Him, but through repentance and Achor's valley, the "door of hope" (Hos. 2:15), the judgment He sustained for them will produce their "joy fulfilled." Joseph suffered for them as well as at their hands, then reconciled them to himself by making himself known to them. Truly this was love and grace in Joseph but they only got the second place, though there was a natural link as his brethren. Asenath (though a Gentile), remained unrivaled still, though no link according to flesh existed before she became his wife. This foretells the greater grace to be displayed in this our day of highest privilege which so enriches the objects of it, bringing them into union with Him, the true Joseph, who is still in rejection by His brethren. But as Joseph in the days of his rejection took Asenath to be his wife, so Christ will present us to Himself, a glorious Church, His bride forever. This will take place before His brethren according to the flesh who in repentance look on Him whom they pierced, and mourn and welcome Him back with, "This is our God; we

have waited for Him."

The third circle is the Egyptians. His wife was given to him, his brethren reconciled. Egypt and the Egyptians he bought. The "field", the world, Christ bought (Matt. 13). His brethren are gathered and associated with Him, and blessed under Him on the earth. His Asenath, the Church, is given Him. All the money of the land of Egypt passed into the hands of Joseph, and when all their money was exhausted, they came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence?" Why, indeed! Evidently Joseph was most accessible, even to these strangers; their very question suggests it to us. Why should they be wanting while he had plenty? Yet they had no money. So he told them to give their cattle, their houses, and their flocks for which he gave them bread. And when that year was ended, they came again and said, "We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands." At their wits' end they told him all, keeping nothing back. Joseph's ready ear was open to their complaint, and his services were at their disposal. He had their confidence, and they offered their bodies and their land, "Buy us and our land." In Genesis 47:23 he told them, "I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land." When they had "spent all," and had nothing more to sell and yielded up their very bodies, then, and only then, did they get the seed for sowing the land, four-fifths of the produce of which was to be their own. How we see the purpose of God as to the pre-eminence of Christ brought out in all this! In all these circles Joseph was supreme. It is like a pyramid with Christ the top and center. He will reign and subdue all things unto Him and thus ratify in manifested power what He effected in the cross-the purchase of the world. This is the base of the pyramid; the Gentile in the day of the fullness of the Jew.

Next, and higher in the pyramid, are His brethren, the circumference diminished greatly, yet consisting of a company numerous according to the promise as the sand by the seashore. And higher still, nearest and dearest, the Church, His body now, His bride hereafter, companion and partner in His glory, and first object of His heart's delight. The three companies are found in Revelation 7. The personal pronoun, "I," represents the Church-our Asenath. John was in the place of separation, and in state was "in the Spirit," which should characterize all who succeed him and share with him Church privilege. This circle, the Church, is followed by another circle consisting of a hundred and forty-four thousand descendants of Joseph's brethren. And then the Gentile company-a great multitude which no man could number. And "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them," in unchallenged pre-eminence.

Joseph and His Brethren

Genesis 47:25 gives the summary of a saint's life in three sentences: "They said, Thou hast saved our lives," "let us find grace," "We will be Pharaoh's servants." Life-grace-service!

Apart from Joseph they were as good as dead. Joseph was life to them, and they were preserved for God sent him "to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). Life is the first thing here; it is the first necessity for all to follow. Faith, as to life, was the first little bit of fruit for God to see after sin and death had been introduced upon the scene by our first parents. "Adam call his wife's name Eve (living); because she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). The very next verse records, by inference, how God shed blood, thus providing a righteous ground on which to answer that faith which He had inspired in His fallen creature's heart. Fallen, ruined, and banished from the garden

of delight, his life is preserved in the death of another.

How thankful we may be, who have Darned our deep need of being "born again" that Christ is our life-the eternal life, the gift of God.

To "find grace" was the next thing they desired. This was very blessed! The people belonged to Joseph; he had bought them. But to be his by right and to be his in grace were two different matters. We can understand their feelings, for their hearts undoubtedly turned with deepest gratitude to the one who had been used for their blessing. To know him only as their benefactor who had saved their lives would have been terms far too cold to meet the emotions of their gratified hearts. He had dealt in righteousness with them, returning to them for their money and cattle and lands and bodies, the bread and seed they needed, thus saving their lives. But they wanted more-his favor!

God has shown this grace to us. Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification thus settling forever the claims of righteousness. But by Him, also, we have access into this grace wherein we stand. Oh, what should we be without this standing in grace! Even the Egyptians required it before Joseph, and I am sure he accorded it to them. The relationship between Joseph and the people he was over was not only established in righteousness but was enjoyed in grace. None could have acted in greater measure toward us as benefactor than the One who has righteously brought us to Himself and then set us in the closest intimacy and relationship that love could suggest or grace provide.

We are exhorted by the Apostle to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Doubtless those preserved by Joseph from famine and death, also found in him a constant friend. They found "grace to help in time of need." How foolish of them if they had not availed themselves of such a friend and such a privilege! How much more foolish are we who, having a far better place and title, are so often found weaving our own plans and getting entangled in their meshes, disowning the grace, denying the truth, and reaping in shame the results of our folly.

The next thing they spoke of was service: "We will be Pharaoh's servants." The order was perfect; not service first, not serving in order to become Joseph's, or to gain his favor, but serving because they were his. They found unconditional grace so they volunteered their service for the debt they owed and for the grace that had first served them.

What a contrast we find in the relationship between Joseph and the Egyptians, and that between the Egyptians and the Israelites, Joseph's brethren, in after days. The grace of the one calls forth the ready service of those under his control, while the arbitrary, cruel, and exacting bondage of the other makes its subjects groan and wrestle for deliverance from the service others sought. The service of grace is perfect freedom; it is of the Spirit and "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Service, so-called, which does not have this character, is not really service at all, but is the fruitless toil of will, or the restlessness of nature, or legality of spirit, or an opiate for an uneasy conscience. Often such service momentarily blunts the sting of conscience, drowning its voice, and remaining meanwhile the chief barrier to restoration of communion and to the path of real service and fruitfulness to God.

In chapter 48 we get the only point in Jacob's history of which Paul makes mention. In dying, Jacob by faith "blessed both the sons of Joseph." He had the agreeable surprise of seeing Joseph's seed when, as he admitted, he had not even thought to see Joseph's face. Jacob was in the act of blessing others and, as is surely always the effect of such a service, it shed a ray of sunshine over everything. The story of his days being "few and evil" is changed for the following acknowledgment of good and blessing on his grandsons: "He blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed (or shepherded) me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." There is nothing like occupation with good, the abundance of the grace that surrounds us and the blessing of others to gladden our hearts and lighten our burdens and quicken our steps as we pass through the valley of the shadow of death. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This was Jacob's happiest moment.

In chapter 49 we get the interesting account of what should befall the sons of Jacob in the last days. He tells them as they are gathered around him. It is prophetic of Israel's history from its apostate state before our Lord's first coming to His return, when He who was rejected by His brethren will sway His blessed scepter over them and the Gentile world-"the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Jacob then gave commandment as to the place of his burial. Canaan was the only fitting place for those whose hopes were for the earth to be realized in their seed though they themselves were heavenly. Thus Jacob died, "and Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him and kissed him." The days of mourning were long, indeed the train of mourners that accompanied Joseph and his brethren to the funeral was vast-all Pharaoh's servants, the elders of his house, all the elders of the land of Egypt, all the house of Joseph and his brethren, and all his father's house except the little ones. There went up also chariots and horsemen, "and it was a very great company." And at the threshing-floor of Atad "they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation.". Yes, it was true: "Jacob have I loved"! It was not his ways that had won the love, or obtained the favor. It was the sovereignty of God in grace, and Joseph was the means of its greatest display.

"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which he did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." This is another time where we read of Joseph weeping. He wept when he saw his brethren at their first interview with him, he wept again when he saw Benjamin on their return to him, and again when he made himself known to them. On all these occasions, though there was sorrow mingled with the tears of joy, they doubtless sprang from a heart full of thankfulness and praise. But this time it was unmingled sorrow and the outflow of a pained heart and grieved spirit. They mistrusted him; he was not really known by those who should have known him best. His fidelity was doubted by these unfaithful ones for whose reconciliation, and far more, he had suffered years of shame and pain and sorrow. But where was the source of this last wound for his tender, loving, and compassionate heart? If what they said was true, it was in the unbelieving Jacob. It may have been a lie. Nevertheless, they blamed it on him and said their action, base and cruel, was at his command. So if the story Jacob's sons told Joseph was a lie, it

was easy to believe; if true, it was surprising. And so it ever is, the saint, however high the ground he takes, if walking badly, may expect to be falsely credited with much that is untrue. What is untrue will be readily received without question, and all the good whether much or little will be choked by the report of evil.

Joseph told them not to fear. Once they knew nothing of fear; now they knew fear, but of a wrong sort—they put him in the place of God and he reproved them for it, and told them they had thought evil against him, but "God meant it unto good." How different this is from the language of his father: "All these things are against me"! Joseph recognized that God, not accident or misfortune, had brought clouds across his path and discovered the mercy, love, and goodness that were there. Surely his language was:

"With mercy and with judgment

My web of time He wove,

And aye the dews of sorrow

Were lustered with His love."

The circumstances had indeed been bitter, but "much people" were saved alive by it so Joseph was satisfied and said: "God meant it unto good." Joseph satisfied them, too, saying, "Fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." How often would we, in such circumstances seek to speak so as to make a grievous offender of one who had drawn forth tears of pain and seek to make him feel bitterly the indignity put upon us, or his mis-judgment of our motives. Not so with Joseph! He reproved their supplanting of God by another, though that other be himself, and overcame the evil of their false judgment of him with good. He bared his heart by speaking kindly with his tongue and dispensing the blessings of his hands, covering, yet reprovng, their iniquity.

When dying, Joseph's faith was still in blessed exercise. Though all seemed exceedingly well in Egypt, indeed Joseph was held almost in reverence by the Egyptians and had all the plenty of the best part of the land, still, much more was needed before the full answer to the promises of God would be realized. Boundless stores of far richer grace were still laid up for the heirs of promise, and faith could be satisfied with nothing less than this—the full development of promises then only partially fulfilled. The land of Canaan, rich with its teeming full-ripe fruits and royal display, is Israel's hope, and Israel's faith rests there.

The Christian's portion is heavenly and in Christ. To win Him is the only true destination of Christian desire and to "know Him" his only present gain. When God has promised, faith is satisfied only with the attainment in fullest consummation of the promise made, though it also yields patience to wait His time for its enjoyment. Thus it was with Joseph who declared when about to die, "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." This was not said in the days of Joseph's low estate in Egypt but in the day of honor and prosperity; this makes it so precious and in the sight of God of great price. It is the faith that counts only what God promises and bestows as true gain and the fruition of all hope.

May God add His rich blessing to these lines, and prove Joseph indeed to be "a fruitful bough" (Gen. 49:22).

The Law of Liberty

If I tell my child to remain in the house when he wishes to go out, he may obey; but it is not a law of liberty to him-he restrains his will. But if I afterward say, Now go where you wish to go, he obeys, and it is then a law of liberty because his will and the command are the same-they run together.

The will of God was for Jesus a law of liberty; He came to do His Father's will; He desired nothing else. Blessed state! It was perfection in Him, a blessed example for us. The law is a law of liberty when the will, the heart of man, coincides perfectly in desire with the law imposed upon him -imposed, in our case, by God-the law written in the heart. It is thus with the new man as with the heart of Christ. He loves obedience, and loves the will of God because it is His will, and as having a nature which answers to what His will expresses, since we partake of the divine nature-in fact it loves that which God wills.

Lay Aside

1 Corinthians 10:23

Often it is asked if it is wrong to do certain things. It may not be wrong for a racer to tie a weight on his leg, but it certainly would not help him win the race. Likewise, anything that would hinder our winning a prize in the Christian race should be laid aside. It is not ours to question whether a thing is wrong or not, but simply whether it helps me to bear a testimony for Him in this dark and needy world.

Let Go: Let God

We have often heard the phrase, "Let go and let God." But too many of us regard it as a mere saying rather than an experience.

Had Moses been like many of us, he would have appointed a "dipping committee" to work on the Red Sea in the crisis hour.

Had Joshua had some of our traits, he would have had a "chiseling committee" busily working on Jericho's walls instead of just marching.

If the Hebrew children headed for the fiery furnace were like some of us, they would have made some attempt at fire protection.

And surely Daniel would have feverishly attempted to figure out some scheme for outwitting the lions.

Had we been in Gideon's shoes when he was deprived of all but three hundred men in the face of extreme danger, we would likely have taken off for home.

These men of God are gone. Only God and we remain, and we face serious days-days akin to those mentioned above. These are days to trust the Lord with simple and unqualified trust. We are prone to have faith in God if the situation is not too grave or if we are guaranteed outside help from human sources. Will we ever learn the meaning of the prophet's message to Asa who had looked to other help by making a league with Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, against Israel's king Baasha?

"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.

The heart that is completely turned toward the Lord for help is the need of the hour among His people of today. Too often God gets only a fraction of our faith, and this He has not promised to bless. We must "let go" of everything else and "let God" have His way.

Let's Sing

When was the last time that you heard a friend or relative singing or humming some good old hymn? Or, for that matter, when was the last time you lifted yourself up spiritually by doing so? Just try it! See what it does for your day. Even now you may be mulling over a problem or burdened down with little things. Try singing "Amazing Grace," or "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." By getting into the habit of making melody in your heart to the Lord, you will not only be lifted up in victory, but also you will be a godly influence on your little ones or others who may hear you.

A Letter From a Doctor to His Sister

My Dear....

I was sorry to find that you had not strictly carried out my prescriptions. I think I know enough to be able to say that I am sure they would have done you good. I have been very sorry to hear that you have been suffering so much. I well know what it is, and have again and again found, through mercy, relief from the line of treatment I indicated in my last letter to you. I can well imagine that those around you can hardly enter into your feelings, unless indeed they have felt the same; but I can and do, dear. I fully trust you will come out of it soon and grow stronger as, if it please God, you grow older. The great thing is not to fight against it; accept it as coming from the Lord, and wait, adoringly wait, till He is pleased to heal you. Not that He is not often pleased to use remedies; but after all, all is in His loving hands. It may not be a lesson for you only, but for others also—for me among the rest. We all feel your suffering greatly, and many prayers go up daily for you. Your part is to be still—do nothing—a hard lesson, but perhaps one you need.

Above all, do not seek and look for a second cause; accept no other cause or reason for your suffering, but simply the Lord's will. If you were and had been as bright a saint as Paul, you would probably have had to go through far more than you ever have or will. Read 2 Cor. 11 and see if you have ever had to suffer anything like that. No doubt he was wonderfully sustained, but if God could sustain him through his great trials, surely He can sustain us through our lesser ones.

Perhaps you think you have failed in some way or other, or altogether. Well, I can only say that that ought to be a settled question. I never heard or read of anybody who hadn't or didn't, except the blessed Lord Himself. But it is just because you and I and the rest of us have failed and come short of the glory of God, that we need a Savior. Blessed be God, He will get all the glory, while we get all the benefit. If we hadn't failed and didn't fail, we should not need a Savior, and we should get the credit and glory. I am glad, through grace, to say with the Apostle Paul, that I prefer "the righteousness which is of God" in Christ to any righteousness that I could possibly have wrought out for myself. We stand before God in His own righteousness which is manifested by His giving Christ (who bore our sins) His present place, and will be further manifested by His giving us manifestly His (that is, Christ's) place before Him in glory. Oh, thought beyond all thought!

The source of our blessing is never what we have done, but what He has done; never what we are, but what He is. Our enjoyment may (not always) depend on our walk and course, but the source is always in God. The blessed Lord Jesus Christ has bought us and paid for us, and He has no thought whatsoever of letting us go, either by our own perverse will or by the will of any other power or creature, blessed be His name!

The Lord never yet gave a single saint to feel satisfaction with himself, and never will. If you wish to be satisfied, turn your eye off self to Him. He only can satisfy the heart's desire. Nor will He ever give you to be a little bit pleased with yourself; no, not a little bit. You would soon be taken up with that little bit and forget all about Him. This could not please Him or be good for you. No dear, that

wouldn't do at all. Give it all up as a downright bad job. Listen! Hear Him say, "Be still, and know that I am God." Mr. Darby said, "I am sure I do not love the Lord enough, but I am sure it is the Lord I love; I have no confidence in my own heart, but all confidence in Him. He has died for me; that is what I count on; He has put away my sins; that is what I need; He is coming again; that is what I am looking for." Bunyan found that Satan could say, "Sell Him, sell Him," much faster than he could answer, "Not for a thousand worlds." Another brother, I forget his name, had a much better plan. He simply prayed, "Lord, do Thou answer for me."

If you could pierce a little hole in the cloud, you would see that all is bright above. All is bright on God's side.

Light Shining Forth

Isaiah 60:1

At the end of Isaiah 59 it is said that the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and upon that is based the exhortation given, "Arise, shine; for thy light" (the Redeemer) "is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." The light now possessed in the Person of the Redeemer, dwelling in Zion, is to be displayed. Notice, too, that this is in contrast to the state of the whole earth. "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." Jerusalem, illuminated with the light of the glory of the Lord, shines in the midst of the dense moral darkness around. It was so with the Lord Himself at His first coming. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." John 1:4,5. So also with the believer, as the Apostle writes: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light" (or, "for the shining forth") "of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6.

Another thing may be observed. When the light shines, whether through Jerusalem or through the believer (as indeed it was also through our blessed Lord and Savior), it is for a testimony—a powerful testimony—to Him who has enkindled it and whose glory is the light. We thus read in our chapter, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." v. 3. (Compare Rev. 21:23,24.) The Gentiles behold and are attracted to the glory that has dawned upon the earth; and "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel," becomes thus the center of universal blessing, the source of all being indicated in the words, "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." v. 19. In dwelling upon this blessed scene, it is well to remind ourselves that God in His grace has set believers, in anticipation of that day, as lights in the midst of the darkness, and if this treasure—the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—is possessed in earthen vessels, it is that the excellency of the power which causes it to shine forth may be of God, and not of us. Christ in glory is always the light in the New Testament, and when our light shines, it is simply the exhibition of Christ in the life.

The Lord Jesus Christ

When the Lord was down here on the earth, His name was Jesus (Matthew 1); but He was also the Christ (John 1:41, etc.). After His death and resurrection, He was made Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36); and He still retains the name of Jesus (Acts 7:59; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 22:16 etc.). His full name for believers now (though He will have other names and titles by-and-by) is the Lord Jesus Christ. Now a name in Scripture is the expression of the truth of what a person is; and so understanding it here, it will be the expression of all that Christ is as the Lord Jesus Christ. The term Lord signifies authority (see Luke 6:46); Jesus is His personal name (Luke 1:31); and inasmuch as He was made Christ after His death and resurrection, this term includes His work.

Malchus and His Kinsman: the Servant's Name

It was Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off in a spirit of wild and reckless enthusiasm. Peter, always energetic, had used the sword in order to defend his Master from His foes. But the sword—the weapon of vengeance—was out of place in such a defense. The Lord was about to surrender Himself into the hands of sinful men for the fulfillment of His mission here below; and self-defense was therefore no part of His gracious plan. He abandoned it in order to accomplish the Scriptures. He had already, while His disciples slept, passed in spirit through the dread ordeal, and was now prepared for all that was to happen.

But such an act of surrender was in contrast with the rash and impulsive disciple. His sleep had ill prepared him for such a trial. He awoke unconscious of the nature of the temptation and of his own moral inability to face it. He, like Samson, was shorn of his locks, yet he flew to the sword; he appealed in his weakest moment to the weapon of natural strife. His intention was, no doubt, good, but his conduct was sadly at fault.

He strikes and cuts off the ear of Malchus. Now, who was Malchus? He was the servant of the high priest. Is this fact not remarkable? Was not the sound of his master's feet behind him? It was, though at some distance. The high priest could hardly, with the propriety becoming his dignified office, sally forth at night in the company of the bloodthirsty crowd that made its way with torches and weapons to dark Gethsemane. No, he remained behind in his palace, but he sent Malchus to fill his place; and he it was who suffered under the stroke of Peter's sword. Had the high priest gone in person, the blow received by his servant would have fallen on him. But as it was, the servant of the high priest and the disciple of Jesus met in conflict, and the former was wounded.

Thus Peter does exploits, but they are out of keeping with the times. David had his "mighty men," the records of whose prowess are placed on the page of history. They fought and won by the use of carnal means; but they acted in keeping with their times.

Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. His disciple did not understand.

How slow we are to learn grace, or to apprehend the unworldly, heavenly nature of Christianity! How slow to learn the differences that God has made in the dispensation of His ways! The law and the sword agreed well; but grace and the sword are absolutely incongruous. Nature understands the former and readily acts upon it, but the Christian should seek to know the latter and to act thereon. The disciple acted in law and used the sword; the blessed Master acted in grace and healed the ear of Malchus. How bright is the contrast!

For the rest of his days the servant of the high priest carried the healing touch of the Lord. How fully he might have described the difference between the hasty, rough disciple and the calm and gentle Master! Was his heart affected? Did he return to his master and declare the tender grace of Jesus to him? We are not informed. It is not Malchus, either wounded or healed, grateful or otherwise, who fills the eye at this crisis. It is the infinite grace of the blessed Lord whose forgiving and healing hand lays itself gently on the servant of His chief enemy. Such touches of His grace

captivate the heart as they speak so unmistakably of who He was. Yes, the Scriptures present to us Jesus in His own perfection, not as compared to but as contrasted with men, and the best of men. Men come before us, indeed, in many different characters, but in the best estate are shown to be only "lighter than vanity"; whereas Jesus-Son of man, Son of God-holds His own peculiar place, "full of grace and truth," just in order that we might discover what that God is against whom we have sinned. For Jesus was, of a truth, God "manifest in the flesh"-a most wonderful fact and worthy of deep and reverent contemplation.

Think, dear reader, of God coming in flesh, of God assuming that condition (all sinless and perfect) in order that we who are in it, fallen and guilty and blinded by sin to all that God is, might get to know Him.

Creation with its innumerable wonders and beauties may tell of His power and skill, but it could not make Him known.

Jesus made Him known. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He was God manifest in the flesh. And in the flesh, a perfect Man (tempted in all points as we are, sin apart and in perfect grace as well as in perfect truth) He heals Malchus in lovely keeping with all His ways from the manger onward. What winsome grace!

In contrast, Peter's hasty conduct bore fruit to his sorrow. That fruit did not end with the sword stroke. Following his Master, now captive, into the palace of the high priest, he takes his place beside the other servants, in which evil company his identity is soon established. He is charged with being a disciple of Jesus, but stoutly denies the charge. Yet one of the company said, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" What a home thrust, and how deeply it must have cut! And by whom was it made? Strange to say, by "his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off" (v. 26). His kinsman had seen the blow given, and now recognized the man who gave it. Here we have an eyewitness to Peter's mistaken zeal and murderous conduct.

Malchus and his kinsman had apparently led the band that followed the traitor, Judas Iscariot, eager to carry out the wishes of their high-priestly master; and being at the front, they were the more readily exposed to any opposition that might arise.

Malchus suffered from, and his kinsman bore witness to, the foolhardiness of Peter. And Peter, at fault in the garden, is still more at fault in the palace. There he strikes a foe; here he denies his Lord.

But did the kinsman, while quickly incriminating Peter, as quickly relate the healing touch of Jesus? Did he tell how speedily and thoroughly and gently the fault of the disciple was more than rectified by the very Master whom Peter now so heartlessly denied? We are not informed.

Little injuries are remembered when large acts of kindness are forgotten; for such is human nature, tainted as it is by sin. Hence, this exquisite proof of the forgiving grace of the blessed Lord may have passed out of the mind as a thing of no account.

Thank God that it is written on the page of inspiration, "He touched his ear, and healed him." Luke 22:51. And so Malchus may have presented himself for years before his master, bearing the visible mark of the healing touch of Jesus-an ever-present witness to His love and pity-who "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to

Him that judgeth righteously." 1 Peter 2:23. Such exhibitions of His grace win the heart and endear Him to it.

Mark 9:49-50

How often have the words of the psalmist king charmed us: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Psalm 37:25. How often, also, have the deliverances recorded in Scripture found a present-day illustration in our own lives or in the lives of others.

The Bible teems with deliverances and is full of hope. God does not always deliver out of trials, but He always carries His people through them, and gives them hope. But God often delivers; indeed, in some cases (we say it reverently), He must, because of His own character.

It is when circumstances close around us and we have no possible way of escape unless God makes it, that deliverance is sure to come. What escape was possible to the Israelites when the Egyptians pursued them? None, absolutely none, humanly speaking. How often have we sung:

"Thine arm hath safely brought us

A way no more expected,

Than when Thy sheep passed through the deep By crystal walls protected."

Only God could have made a way of escape for the three Hebrew children. Who would have thought that the fire would burn their bands, slay their enemies, and give them the company of the Son of God in such a splendid fashion? (Dan. 3).

Again, only God could have made a way of escape for Daniel in the den of lions. Only God could have shut their mouths and used them as a bodyguard for His servant instead of devouring him. They were hungry enough, as Daniel's enemies soon found out when they themselves were thrown into the den.

Do we need to multiply instances? The Bible teems with them. The Apostle Paul's life was made up of deliverances. He wrote of God those grateful and triumphant words: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver...." 2 Cor. 1:10.

Past, present and future! What a God! How we can trust Him!

Two instances come to my mind as happening under my own observation.

An old Christian lady was sitting in her armchair with her aged husband, an invalid, near her on the sofa. The last piece of food had been taken from the shelf and eaten, and the last shovel-full of coal was burning out on the hearth. Yet her spirit was brave, and her trust, deepened by many an experience, strong as ever. Her husband grew petulant and wanted to know what was to be done. "God will provide," she calmly replied, and his impatient rejoinder was cut short by a knock at the door. A Christian lady handed them an envelope with the message that her mother could not rest until it was delivered. The envelope contained several dollars. The aged husband burst into tears of joy when he saw how God had answered his wife's faith.

A Christian young man was in need of work. He looked most industriously for it, and wore out two or three pairs of shoes in his search. Meanwhile he was living on a small sum of money received from the sale of an aunt's furniture. Smaller and smaller it dwindled, till at last he had spent his last dollar and hope of work seemed as far off as ever. A Christian, who had taken a deep interest in his case, gave him some money (which he could not well spare), but before it was spent, work was found most unexpectedly; and from that day to this, an interval of several years, he has enjoyed good health and steady work.

I have often noticed when the circumstances are hopeless as far as men are concerned, God comes in. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. 10:13.

Oh! so Little

We need to know more of our true character as strangers here; it would remove many difficulties out of our path and make many things pleasant which are now really very trying. People think very little of many inconveniences and hardships they have to endure while on a journey away from home which, if at home, would not be so easy to put up with. We shall have plenty of rest and ease when at home in the Father's house. Besides, if we are looking onward with delight and joy to something which is coming, we do not feel the pressure of present things half so much as those who are not doing so. We, therefore, do well at times to keep that bright day of glory before our souls, knowing that it will soon burst upon our view in all its eternal realities; and in the light of that glory, present things look so little-oh, so little! On the other hand, everything connected with Christ and His Church appears so weighty-oh, so weighty!

I wish these things had more power over us all, for I see very plainly that much of the weakness and failure among God's people is because heavenly things are so little before our minds. We get to looking at the things which are seen instead of the things which are unseen, and our souls get dragged down by them. It would not be so if we were more occupied with Christ up there and His glory down here, ever ready to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

May the Lord keep us from looking for ease or satisfaction in this world as a way to be happy, for if we do we shall be sadly disappointed. For in the Lord alone, lasting joy is to be found. We ought to be drawing from Him now, moment by moment, but we are prone continually to look for it in something down here. This is a great mistake, and when earthly-minded, we reap sorrow instead of joy (Phil. 4:4).

Our Comfort in Waiting

What does the believer wait for? It is not for the appearing of the Lord as Judge on the great white throne, but for His coming to claim His redeemed ones. The believer waits for that moment when he shall be taken up to be with the Lord Jesus. God's first mark of approbation for His Son's work on the cross was that He should not be alone in glory, but that He should have a people comprising His bride, the Lamb's wife, gathered around Himself for eternity.

Until that glorious day when He comes for His bride, He would have a people down here who can look up to Him where He is now at the Father's right hand, and know the character of His love for them. The light of His glory is enshrined and reflected in them; indeed, He is in them (John 17:23).

This, then, is our comfort as believers, as those who can say, "Christ loves me, He is going to glorify me, and I am waiting for Him." We are a people who have passed off the ground of the first Adam to a new standing, where we are not only washed and forgiven, but from where we can now look forward to His soon return for us.

The Passover

Read Heb. 3:1-6; 12:1-3

"Jesus, Thou art enough, the mind and heart to fill." I have sometimes thought it might be said that man's superiority over other creatures is in mind and heart. The angels excel in strength. It is never said that they are made in the image of God. Man's heart is very large. There is but One who can fill man's heart. When the Lord is before us, we have One who can and does fill the heart and mind. The above two scriptures bring Him before us in two different ways, perhaps three. He is brought before us in many ways in Scripture. Sometimes in His eternal glory; then again in His manhood; then back to glory. His glory is great and His glories are many. Joseph's father loved him, and made him a coat of many colors; apply this in type to the Lord Jesus. He has personal glories, and glories that have been given Him.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." Much there is in these few words! "Consider" (the word "consider" is found again in chapter 12) "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (J.N.D. Trans.). His apostleship was on earth; His high priesthood is in heaven. Let us consider these two things. What is our confession? It is that God is known, is revealed, is no longer concealed, no longer in darkness. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." In 1 John 4 we get "God is love" twice, but in the first chapter it is "God is light." The next thing is, where God is; that is, "in the light." Then as to our confession, it is walking "in the light." He told the prophets of old a great deal about Himself, but when He is revealed, it is alone in the Person of His Son (John 1:18).

In the first chapter of Hebrews where we have the Lord as the Apostle of our confession, it begins, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us" in the Person of "His Son." Now, see what it says, once our attention has been called to that Person. "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Such is our confession, of which the Lord is the Apostle. What a subject for consideration!

The High Priest brings Him before us in heaven, as the One who is qualified to sustain us in the circumstances of faith-as the One who lives within the veil, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

His advocacy (1 John 2:1) is another thing; it is the grace which restores our souls if we wander and sin. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." There, it is the Lord as restorer of our souls. He brings the soul back into the communion of the relationship into which we have been brought.

His high priestly service is another thing. It is His sustaining us in the midst of difficulties; and we are exhorted to consider Him in this capacity. In chapter 5 the priesthood is the position to which He has been called, and there He sustains us. How precious that makes the Lord to us! He has felt

what we feel, has entered into all that we pass through. Do we know what it is to consider the Lord in that way? It is a wonderfully sustaining truth in sorrow to know Him thus, who lives in sympathizing love for us.

Another thing is the position He occupies in the house of God. God has a house on the earth. "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." God's dwelling place on earth is in the midst of His people. The place that the Lord Jesus occupies in the house is not as a servant in the house, but He is a Son over it. Moses was a servant in it, and was faithful to Him who called him. The Lord Jesus is a Son over the house, and "faithful to Him that appointed Him." We get Him in Revelation, chapters 1-3, as Son over the house in addresses to the churches. "I have not found thy works perfect before God," etc. Here it is the Lord maintaining what is becoming to the house of God.

In Heb. 12 we find the Lord, not as Apostle, not as High Priest, but as what? "The beginner and completer of faith." He began and completed that path in all perfection. How far is it our habit to consider the Lord in the path of faith?

In these three ways we are called upon to consider Him: as Apostle, as High Priest, and as beginner and completer of faith, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." This is very precious. He was sustained in that path of faith. What sustained Him? That which was at the end-"who for the joy," etc. What can sustain us in the path of faith fraught with difficulties from beginning to end? One way to be overcome is to get occupied with the difficulties. We need to look at Him. So "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest," etc. If we get occupied with the circumstances, we faint in our minds; we need an object before us.

Paul said, "If by any means I might obtain," etc. The object was before him. In going up a steep hill, if the mind gets occupied with something else, one is soon there. Keep the eye on an object, and the heart is sustained.

If we go back to the first chapter, we find Him at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This is another view-point.

With these few thoughts before us, let us consider Him: the Apostle, High Priest, and the One who endured, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. Long or short, the way is difficult. What enables us to surmount is to consider that One who has gone before and has reached the goal.

The Present Place of the Lord Jesus: a Man in the Glory

I desire to bring a few scriptures before you that speak of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as He is now as a risen Man in the glory of God. Many of the Lord's people know the blessed truth of forgiveness of sins through His precious blood, and are trusting simply to His finished work on the cross, but they have never thought much of the glory of the Person who did the work, nor of the place where He is now.

Many, when they think of the Lord, only think of Him as dying on the cross for their sins; others think of Him as risen on earth, and then have a sort of vague, indistinct idea that after He left this earth He ceased to be a man, and is now in the form of God again, although still believing that He ever lives to make intercession for us.

Others have said, "I never thought of the Lord Jesus as a Man in heaven; I had always thought of Him more as a spirit."

This has led me to bring a few scriptures together that speak of this wonderful truth of Christ being a Man in the glory of God; for until this is seen there can be no growing in the things of God or in the understanding of His Word.

Many, I believe, spiritualize the Lord's second coming because they think of the Lord as a spirit, and thus His coming must be a spiritual one, too.

The first scripture we will look at is Luke 24:36. Here we find the Lord Jesus appearing to His disciples after He had risen from the dead with the blessed words on His lips, "Peace be unto you." They saw Him who had died for their sins, and saw that He was alive again.

"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." They thought, as some do now, that the Lord was a spirit; but what did the Lord say to them? Verse 38: "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." Here we see the same Jesus that was on earth, now risen from the dead, He Himself with a body of flesh and bones which He assured them a spirit had not. Then verse 50: "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." And in Acts 1:9: "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Thus we see that the blessed Lord rose from the dead with a body of flesh and bones, and with that body went up into heaven. He did not vanish from their sight in an instant, but evidently they saw Him go up, as we gather from Acts 1:10: "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

This same Jesus was to come again as they had seen Him go. We can picture those disciples gazing up into heaven, their eyes following their Lord as He went up... until the cloud hid Him from their view. That same Jesus was to come back again, and so He will; but before that day comes we are permitted to look, so to speak, by faith on the other side of that cloud, and see this same Jesus where He is now.

Turn to Acts 7:55: "But he" (Stephen), "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

What a wonderful scene! Here was a man washed so clean in the precious blood of Christ that he could be filled with the Holy Spirit, and the heavens were opened for him to look in. And what did he see? He saw the glory of God, we are told; but he did not speak of that; his eyes were fixed upon a Person in that glory. There was no cloud to hide that blessed One from Stephen's sight; he saw "this same Jesus," the Son of man, in the glory of God. The disciples looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, and the cloud received Him out of their sight; Stephen looked steadfastly into heaven and saw the Savior there-"the Son of man... on the right hand of God."

This same Jesus also spoke from heaven to the Apostle Paul when he was converted. "As he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Acts 9:3-5.

Here is the same One that went up from Bethany, whom Stephen saw in the glory of God, speaking from heaven to his bitterest enemy on earth to "show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." 1 Timothy 1:16.

Another passage is Revelation 5:6 which, although the truth in it is given to us in figurative language, is nevertheless equally clear.

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes." Here in the midst of the throne of God and the heavenly saints, represented by the four and twenty elders, is the Lamb as it had been slain. The Lord Jesus who has been slain but is now alive again, and has entered as man into the glory of God, is the object of the praise and worship of all heaven. All power is given to Him (seven horns), and the perfection of sight (seven eyes)-nothing escapes His notice. The Lord Jesus said, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye" (those that are His) "see Me." John 14:19. This is true now. "Ye see Me." Believers, not the world, see Him. Of course it is by faith. And where do we see Him? No longer on earth, but where He is now, in the glory of God. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." Hebrews 2:9.

But in case it might be thought that in pressing the manhood of the Lord Jesus, His Godhead glory has been overlooked, I will quote a verse in Colossians 2 where we have the Godhead glory and at the same time His manhood brought out in one short verse (v. 9): "For in Him" (Christ) "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (or in a bodily form); that is to say, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in the Person of "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

May the eyes of our faith be upon Him where He is in all His glory, that we, by beholding it, may be changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). That is what takes place now. Beholding Him by faith where He is, we become morally more like Him till that day comes when He "shall change our vile body" (or body of humiliation), "that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (or body of glory). Then we shall be like Him, conformed to His image and, although He will eternally be man, He must ever be the object of our worship and adoration, for He is "the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

Psalm 150

"Now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory, and honor." Heb. 2:8, 9.

Here the Apostle states two things-what we do see, and what we do not see. On earth we do not yet see all things put under Christ; in heaven we see Him in power and glory. But in the intelligence and enjoyment of Christ in resurrection, faith sees the things of earth in their proper relationship to Him. Thus, and thus only, is our estimate of earthly things correct. Christ is not in earth's fairest scenes-the eye does not see Him there. The busy, active, crowded, and, it may be, gorgeous scene is empty. The glory of all nations, tongues, and peoples may be concentrated within the limits of the eye's vision; still, He is not there-all the glory fades before the eye of faith-the thought of His absence dims its brightest luster. But, unhappily, the eye of faith is sometimes dim. Sometimes Christians get so far away from Christ in heart that they become engrossed in the affairs of this life, and some even visit and enjoy the poor, empty, tinsel shows of this world's vanity. What could be more lamentable? They forget that death's stamp is deeply graven on everything this side of resurrection. But such actions clearly prove that the heart must have been away from Christ for some time. Such points are only reached step by step.

Even the natural man himself, although he knows nothing better, will own that such things are but the mere glitter of human vanity, and all vexation of spirit. But, in faith's estimation, everything is empty which Christ does not fill; and there, it has to confess, His hand is not seen in the whole assemblage of this world's glories. They are not yet under His hand; they are not yet the reflection of His glory. Hence, important questions arise. Whose hands are they under? Of whose glory are they the reflection? Faith's ready answer is-What is not of the Father is of the world-What is not of Christ is of Satan-What is not of the Spirit is of the flesh. "We see not yet all things put under Him."

We have only to wait "a little while" and "the world to come" shall be put in subjection under the Son of man. The expression "world to come" means the dispensation to come, or the millennial age. The Lord's name will then be excellent in all the earth, and His glory above the heavens (Psalm 8). But till then, the Christian must pass through the world as a stranger and a pilgrim. Our citizenship is in heaven; we cannot be citizens of both heaven and earth at the same time; once we were citizens of this world; now we are citizens of heaven, and ought to walk as such, though still here. We no longer belong to the old world out of which the Lord has called us, but to the new world into which He is leading us. What a good report the Spirit gives of the patriarchs on this point. "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11:15, 16. What a noble testimony this is! "God is not ashamed to be called their God." Happy for the believer when the Lord is not ashamed of the place he takes in this world, or rather, outside of it!

Let us now turn for a moment to the second thing-what we do see. "We see Jesus." This is more important to us than the coming Millennium. He who bore our sins on the cross and suffered death for us is on the throne. What could be more wonderful to us? And what a proof to us that our sins are gone! His finished work ought to be the complete settlement of every question about our sins and should produce perfect rest of the heart, and the living spring of joyous worship. The first glimpse of Jesus crowned with glory and honor should separate the heart forever from the world which crucified Him, and, practically, unite it to heaven. It should change completely the thoughts and feelings by transferring them all to Him who is there. All we love is there; all our interests are there. That is the only way of becoming heavenly minded. We can never become so by trying; we must be occupied with a heavenly object; we must "see Jesus... crowned with glory

and honor."

True, most true, there are many still here whom we love, and many may be the tender ties and interests that we cherish; but everything is to be viewed in the light of the risen Jesus, and loved according to our connection with Him. But there are few things that we realize so little as our resurrection life.

What, then, do we see when we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor? Most surely, we see our place and image in Him there. How simple, yet how powerful! It is the proper action and power of faith. Christ is the divine expression, the perfect definition of every Christian's position in the presence of God. Oh, what a truth this is, and what a power it has when enjoyed in communion with the mind of heaven! The more we contemplate Him, the more intensely and fixedly the eye gazes on Him there, the more will our thoughts and feelings become heavenly. "But 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. This is the only way of becoming spiritually minded, the only path to true happiness, and the only ground of heavenly worship and of continual joy in the Lord.

The Refiner of Silver

Many years ago, a few ladies who met together in Ireland to read the Scriptures and make them the subject of conversation, were reading the third chapter of Malachi.

One of the ladies gave it as her opinion that the "fullers' soap" and the "refiner of silver" was the same image, both intended to convey the same view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ; while another observed, "There is, something remarkable in the expression in the third verse, "He shall SIT as a refiner and purifier of silver."

They agreed that possibly it might be so, and one of the ladies promised to call on a silversmith, and report to them what he said on the subject. She went accordingly, and without telling him the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver. This he fully described to her. "But," said she, "do you sit while the work of refining is going on?"

"Oh, yes, madam," he replied, "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, for if the time necessary for refining is exceeded, the silver is sure to be injured."

At once she saw the beauty and the comfort of the expression, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

Christ sees it needful to put the children into the furnace, but He is seated alongside of it; His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random. The very hairs of their head are all numbered.

As the lady was leaving, the silversmith called her back, and said he had further to mention that he only knew when the work was complete by seeing his own image reflected in the silver.

A beautiful figure! When Christ SEES His own image in His people, the work of purifying is accomplished!

It has been well said, "If thou art a child of God, there is no exemption from the household discipline. The voice that speaks may seem rough, but the hand that smites is gentle. The furnace may be seven times heated, but the refiner is seated by. His object is not to consume, but to purify. All, be assured, will yet bear the stamp of love. The saint on earth can say regarding his trials, in faith and in trust, 'I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right.' The saint in glory can go a step further, 'I see, O Lord, that they are so!'

"Believer, on a calm retrospect of thy heaviest afflictions, tell me, were they unneeded? Was this which Augustine calls 'the severe mercy of God's discipline' - was it too severe? Less would not have done. He may have led thee to a Zarepath ('a place of furnaces'), but it is to show thee there 'one like unto the Son of God!'

"When was thy God ever so near thee, or thou to thy God, as in the furnace fires? The spices in the temple of old were bruised. The gold of its candlestick was beaten gold! My soul, be still! Thou

hast in affliction one means of glorifying God, which even angels have not in a sorrowless world: patience under the rod-submission to thy Father's will."

"Yes, patience! there may come a time When these dull ears shall hear aright,

Strains that outring earth's drowsy chime,

As heaven outshines the taper's light!"

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:7

Religion: What God's Word Says About It

Religion is a word often found upon men's lips, but seldom in the Scriptures. By men it is used in different ways. Some build their thoughts of happiness and hopes of eternal bliss upon it. It is erroneously said:-

-Tis religion that can give

Sweetest pleasures while we live;

`Tis religion can supply

Solid comfort when we die."

Other men effect to despise religion, thinking that it is ever vain. Though Scripture seldom uses the word, it corrects both these extreme and erroneous notions.

We read of the "the Jews' religion" (Gal. 1:13, 14). When Paul stood before Agrippa he said, "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." Acts 26:5. To this sect then we must look for the perfection of religion according to the flesh. We read much of it in the four gospels. These Pharisees were so scrupulous in the observance of religious ceremonies that they would not eat without washing or baptizing their hands. They ceremonially cleansed the vessels which contained their food, the couches upon which they reclined to take it, and their hands by which they partook of it (Mark 7). They were so particular as to the tithes which were due to God that they tithed even mint and anise and cumin (Matt. 23:23). Yet for all that, they knew not God, nor practiced His ways in judgment, mercy, and faith. When His Son was among them, they condemned Him as irreligious because He performed His acts of mercy upon the Sabbath day and at the last clamored for His death as a blasphemer. He said, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." Matt. 12:7. That is, the manifestation of God's character is more pleasing to Him than any outward rites or ceremonies. But, alas! how could they exhibit His character whom they knew not?

In this "straitest sect" of religion Paul had the very chiefest place (see Phil. 3). And yet, when his eyes were opened, how vain all his religion appeared! Pursuing it in the most zealous way, he found himself in open rebellion against God, His Christ, and His saints. The highest degree attainable in religion according to the flesh is worth no more than this. With all his boasted privileges and zeal he found himself the chief of sinners, dependent for salvation wholly upon that Jesus of Nazareth whom he had despised, and whose followers he had persecuted. He obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief; and his heart rejoiced in that faithful saying which he wrote for others, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Timothy 1:15.

Now James speaks in his epistle of "pure religion and undefiled" (chapter 1:27). What is that? The reproduction of God's own character in mercy and holiness. And in whom does that take place? In those who can say, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." v. 18. They are begotten

of God. Only in those who are partakers of the divine nature can the divine character be manifested. Many use the epistle of James in a very bad way, avowing that religion and works can render a sinner acceptable to God. But let us begin where he begins. Let us listen to him as he says, "Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth." He therefore exhorts us to be swift to hear. Wherefore? Because the Word of God, coming to us from Himself, is the instrument by which we are begotten, and by which all that is pleasing in His sight is wrought in us. All comes from Him. Let us never lose sight of this momentous principle in reading the epistle of James.

The Word acts upon the heart and thus produces the results which are according to God. Others see the results and judge accordingly. Thus he says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." How perfect an expression of this we have in the Pharisees of whom we have spoken. Their religious appearance was wonderful. But their words to the Son of God, spoken out of the abundance of the heart, betrayed their ignorance of God and His ways. "Go ye," He bade them, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Matt. 9:13.

He would have them know their ignorance and need that they might come to Him as the Physician who alone could heal them. Alas! they refused, and He could only pronounce judgment upon them as hypocrites whose hearts were deceived, and whose appearance deceived others (Matt. 23).

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It is said of God, "In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy" Hos. 14:3. We were as fatherless in this world of sin and sorrow, for our hearts were bereft of all true comfort and blessing. There was not a thing we turned to for protection and solace but death struck it sooner or later. We turned to Him as prodigals who had sought joy in a far-off country, but had found only deepening misery. We turned to Him who received us more graciously than tongue can tell, and took away by the sacrifice of Christ all our iniquity. We have obtained mercy. Now, knowing Him as our Father, we may turn to this weary world to find objects of compassion in the fatherless and widows. We may follow Him of whom it is written, He "went about doing good." Precious occupation!

Are we religious in this way? Has this word its true place in our hearts? Do we diligently seek out those whom death has afflicted, whom sorrow has stricken? Do we take pleasure in ministering to them, not as an act of mere philanthropy, but as expressing the kindness of God? Note that we are not bidden to form or join charitable institutions, benevolent societies, or the like. Donations or subscriptions are not sought. It is said, "to visit." What is insisted upon is the personal manifestation of the compassions of God in individual intercourse with the afflicted. And how sweetly may all who are abiding in communion do this with that Heart from whence all true comforts flow, though some may have to say with an apostle of Christ, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." Acts 3:6. He gave more than money to that poor cripple, for he linked him with the all-powerful name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. That precious name of Him who meets all need may be borne by the, poorest saint into the house of the afflicted and

sorrowing.

But while the grace of the Father is manifested, the holiness of God is to be maintained. How perfectly this was so in Jesus! The Father was fully manifested in Him in perfect love and grace; yet even demons owned Him as the "Holy One of God." The world has cast off God to do its own will in corruption and violence. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4. Solemn words! How many allow what are called "charitable purposes" to link them with worldly ways and worldly people. Let us remember this, that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father consists not alone in visiting the afflicted, but also in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. It has its two elements which cannot be separated; we are to visit in the activity of love and grace; but we are also to keep ourselves in the unrelenting exclusiveness of holiness.

This is a day of much religion. The heart wearies amid that which has a form of godliness, but denies its power. May God our Father grant that our hearts may be abiding in holy separation to Himself, and in the full enjoyment of His love and

infinite, goodness, so that we may be found

practicing in this world pure religion and undefiled.

The Resurrection

John 20:1-4

For the third time John is presented as the disciple whom Jesus loved, again in association with Peter, this time on the resurrection morning. The two disciples, learning from the women that the sepulcher is empty, hasten to the tomb. Then follows the record of what might appear to be insignificant details: Peter starts first to the tomb, both disciples run together, and finally, the disciple whom Jesus loved did outrun Peter. However, nothing that the Spirit of God has recorded can be unimportant, although, as in this case, it may be difficult to seize the import of a particular incident. Yet, if we may be allowed to spiritualize this scene, we may learn what is surely true: that while the man of ardent nature may often take the lead at the beginning of some spiritual enterprise, it is the man who is leaning on the love of the Lord that finally leads the way.

Sacrifices of God

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51:17.

Safety

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1.

Any pious Jew having a renewed nature, in old time, might know and use this psalm, saying, "Jehovah, my Shepherd." The holiness of God was not fully revealed; therefore, the conscience was not disquieted, nor the distance felt. They knew the favor of God, and counted on His goodness then; but now we are brought into the light, and see what judgment is. The veil is rent, and God's holiness is manifested, for we are in the light as He is in the light, through Jesus. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth" (1 John 2:8).

Now that sin has been fully shown out-the death of Christ proving what the enmity of the heart is-this matter must be settled. I cannot say, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever," if I have not the knowledge of sins forgiven. I cannot talk of confidence if I have a fear of judgment and I see the desert of sin in the light of His holiness. I cannot consistently speak of One who may be my Judge, that He is my Shepherd, and I shall dwell with Him. To know Him as our Shepherd, we must not have the matter of sins being forgiven left unsettled. God cannot let sin into His presence. There must be a conscience purged. Christ has been accepted, and He puts us into His place, having made peace through the blood of His cross. He has "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). He has "entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12).

The starting point of Christian experience is God is for us; and "If God be for us, who can be against us?" I am the object of His favor which is better than life. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters." I shall find good everywhere. I shall lie down, no one making me afraid. Though the wolf may prowl in the way, I lie down in green pastures. It is "He leadeth me," and that must be in perfect peace and enjoyment, "beside the still waters." This is the natural Christian state. We realize all things as ours, for God is for us; therefore we may lie down.

We shall have conflict, etc., but amidst it all is enjoyment. If the sorrow gets between our souls and God, so as to produce distrust, it is sin. Even if sin comes in, sad as it is, He can restore the soul. Whether from trouble or from offending, He can restore. See what thoughts are here given about God! The psalmist does not say, I must get my soul restored and then go to God, but "He restoreth my soul." So "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1). Who can restore but He? There may be something to correct in us, even if we have not actually fallen. There may be hardness in my heart, which trouble shows me, and the like. But if He restores, it is "for His name's sake." Whatever / am, God is for me, and not only in this way, but also against enemies. For, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Man had reason to quail at death before Christ came, but now, in the fullest sense, we need "fear no evil." Death is "ours" now. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." 2 Cor. 1:9. If they took my life, they could not hurt me, for I was

trusting to One who could raise me. Paul as good as says, If they take this life, I have lost nothing; no, it is positive gain, for it hastens me on the road. Death is not terrible now. Why? "Thou art with me." It is terrible without this.

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." It is not a rod, but Thine, so I shall fear no evil. No one can compete with God. Death is the very thing by which Christ has saved me, and it is that by which He may take me into His presence-"Absent from the body... present with the Lord." It may come as a trial to exercise my soul. Well, I have to remember, "Thou art with me."

There is not only death to face and failure in life, but there are other mighty enemies (verse 5). Nevertheless, I can sit down among them, and find everything given me for food. In the presence of all, I can sit down and say, I have done with them all, for "Thou art with me." I have found that power by which they are made nothing to me. Then we arrive at still further security, joy, and blessedness: "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Now that Christ has ascended, and the Holy Spirit has been given, there is triumphant peace and abounding joy through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I now find God Himself as the source of all, and not only is this a present thing, but seeing what God is, I can say, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." For us, it is the Father's house. There are not only blessings conferred, but there is a place to dwell with the Father forever. Whatever it is we meet with by the way, we know it is all for good, and we shall dwell forever with Him. Wonderful grace!

My Salvation, My God: Written in 1652

In Rev. 5:5, the One who can step forward when all others have failed-not one in heaven, in earth, or under the earth being worthy to open the book and loose its seals-is the blessed One who comes according to God's purpose in the royal line of Judah, and who, because of this, is termed, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah." He alone can take the book, open its seals, and unfold those things which are coming to pass upon the earth. He is the worthy and powerful One, but is not manifested as such till all others have been proved unworthy to undertake such a work. How suitable and appropriate is the name, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah"! We know Judah was the tribe from which Christ, or Messiah, came; and the name "Lion" gives the thought of majesty and power, so Jacob compared Judah to a lion in Gen. 49:9: "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?"

The same symbol is used in connection with Israel, and awaits fulfillment in a future day: "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 eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Numb. 23:24.

The Lord, in His character as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, is the One who will bring this about. At present, He is still despised and rejected by man, but accepted of God, and seated at His right hand; He awaits the time when He will make His enemies His footstool, and all things shall be put in subjection under Him. Then His lion-like character of power and majesty will be manifested.

Another very important point which this portion brings before us, is that He does not take the place of opening the book because of His divine glory or because He is worthy, but because He "prevailed." His victory through His death is what is made prominent.

The Lord might at any time have taken that book and opened the seals because of His personal worthiness, but had He done so on that ground, we could not have known the wonderful unfoldings (or the secrets) of the book. No, He would not thus open the seals; but by having become man, and still being a divine person, He had power to go down into death and to rise victoriously. He overcame; He conquered; or, as the Scripture says, "He prevailed." On this ground He takes the book and 'Opens the seals and can unfold to us through John what is to take place on this earth after He will have His Church with Himself in the glory.

"Lion of Judah's tribe,

Thy kingly power we own;

All blessing, might, ascribe

To Him upon the throne.

For Thou halt purchased by Thy blood,

And made us kings and priests to God."

Dear reader, do you rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ will yet have that place of honor and glory, or do you fear as you think of this? If you know Him in His lamb-like character, that is, as the One who has been a sacrifice for sin, and can say, "He died for me," you will rejoice that He will have His rightful place. But if you are not able to say so from the heart, you may well fear and tremble at the thought of His coming power and glory. Man must have Him as his Savior, or as his Judge. Which will it be with you?

The Sea of Tiberias

"I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Luke 12:19, 20.

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Matt. 15:28.

The above two scriptures seem almost like a New Testament commentary upon the Old Testament story of Nabal and Abigail (1 Sam. 25). David was at this time, though God's anointed king, a homeless wanderer and fugitive from the hands of Saul, accompanied only by a small band of faithful followers who owned his claims.

What an illustration this is of the present position of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's King, rejected and cast out by the world. "The kings of the earth stood up," we read in Acts 4, "and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ." "We will not have this man to reign over us," was the world's verdict, and the last it saw of Him, He was hanging upon a cross between two thieves. When next it sees Him, He will be coming in "power and great glory," in righteousness to "judge and make war.... And... on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 19).

Well, here we find David needing provisions and, being in the neighborhood of this wealthy man of the world whose shepherds he had protected amid the rocky solitudes of Carmel, he sends to ask for supplies for the young men, with the quiet dignity of conscious power. "Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus ye shall say to him,... Peace."

What a lovely word! How well calculated to touch the heart of even the most thorough worldling! It is just one thing that the world cannot supply, or money purchase. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" The world speaks of joy, mirth, pleasure, but never mentions peace, for it knows it not. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." Isa. 48:22.

"Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not?" said Nabal; and when David heard the reply, he said, "Gird ye on every man his sword." If he will not have peace, judgment must fall. Alas! for Nabal. The offer of peace rejected, he fell under the judgment of God. The sweet message of mercy scoffed at and ignored, he sat down to eat and drink while death was hovering over his threshold. "And it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died."

"So David's young men... came and told him all those sayings." There is a sweet thought here for all the Lord's servants. When the Word has been preached and the people have dispersed, then it is your privilege to return and tell Him about it. "Send me away," said Eliezer, "unto my master" (Gen. 24:54). Flushed with the success of his mission, one less devoted might have been inclined to linger in the happy surroundings where he had been so blessed. But his heart was with his

master, and all the joy and success was incomplete till shared with him. So too, the apostles whom the Lord had sent forth, "when they were returned, told Him all that they had done" (Luke 9:10).

But it is a relief now to turn to Abigail and follow the footsteps of this woman of faith. Doubtless the fame of David had reached her ears. She had heard of his gracious acts, his mighty power. She believed him to be God's anointed, though at the moment a fugitive from the hands of Saul. Her servants told her how the message of peace had come to her household, and of its rejection; and, like one of an earlier day, "moved with fear," she determined to go to meet him, and seek the salvation of herself and of her people. Happy decision!

Abigail made haste. Three times we read that she made haste. She must make peace with David without delay. All other concerns must be thrown aside till this momentous matter had been settled, and her salvation secured. "Abigail made haste," and taking her true place before David in utter self-abasement at his feet, she owned her sins, sought his forgiveness, and acknowledged him as lord.

How sweetly must those words have sounded in the ears of the hunted fugitive-"My lord"- though they came from a feeble woman's lips. How cheering the confident confession, "My lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days... But when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid." Like the dying thief, she looked on to a day of glory and, like him, she received a ready reply to her petition-"Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person."

What a marvelous picture of Christ's way of receiving sinners! And how sweet it is to His heart now, to be sought and owned by poor lost ones like you and me in this day of His rejection. Listen to His own words as He describes it when the poor outcast of John 4 owns Him in her heart as "the Christ"; "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," and in Luke 15, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

And listen to what David says to Abigail: "Blessed be thou." Why? What was she blessed for? Because she took her true place as a needy suppliant, and owned him as her Savior. Because her faith recognized him as God's anointed and, cost what it might, she determined to throw in her lot with him. So he calls her blessed.

Well, David never forgot Abigail's faith. But he was not content that she should remain at a distance from him; so, after the death of Nabal, he sent for her to be his wife. And will anything short of union satisfy the heart of Christ for His blood bought ones? No; "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

As Abigail shared the fortunes of David, as she roamed with him from one hiding place to another-sharing his poverty and hardship-some might have said, What folly to give up a luxurious home and the broad acres and great possessions of her husband Nabal, for a life of trial and privation. But a day of reversal was coming, a day for which she was content to wait, when David, with the kingdom restored to him, would be reigning at Jerusalem, and she reigning with him. And how richly did that time compensate for all the sorrows of the past!

"He and I, in that bright glory,

One deep joy shall share;

Mine, to be forever with Him,
His, that I am there."

Sealed With the Holy Spirit

In John 14:16, 17, and 26 the Lord promises that the Father will send another Comforter. He was going away, but this other Comforter would abide with them forever, and would dwell with them and be in them. In Acts 2:33, Peter says that He has now come. Pentecost was fifty days after the resurrection of Christ. Then it was that the baptism of the Holy Ghost took place. (The baptism of fire is judgment, and is still future: Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16. Notice John 1:33 leaves the baptism of fire out). First Corinthians 12:12, 13 tells us it was the forming of believers, sealed with the Spirit, into one body.

If you examine the Scriptures you will see that the baptism of the Spirit is not individual, but corporate. Individuals are sealed. The body was formed by the Holy Spirit coming upon them all at once; since then, we, Jews or Gentiles who have believed the gospel, are united to the Head and to each other by receiving the Holy Spirit. Some have mistakenly called this the second experience or blessing; but really, no one in Scripture is called a Christian till the Holy Spirit dwells in him (Rom. 8:9, 15; John 7:39).

It is not by external signs that we know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). He bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). It is by Him that we say, "Abba Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). He comes to dwell in us because we are sons. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.

We will look now at some of the ways of God in The Acts of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 1 we find the disciples, for ten days after the ascension of Jesus, waiting in prayer for the promise of the Father (vv. 4, 5); and in chapter 2 we are told how He came. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. It was not babbling or jabbering; it was intelligent speaking which those present could understand and by which every one could hear in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. This was the beginning of the time mentioned in Caiaphas' prophecy (John 11:52) when the children of God were to be gathered into one.

Peter had been given by the Lord (Matt. 16:19) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, (not of heaven-that has no keys) that is, the authority to admit or reject the subjects for the kingdom-the profession of Christ's name on earth. He now stands up (Acts 2:14-41) and convicts them of rejecting and murdering the Messiah, whom God has now glorified, and quotes Joel 2 to show them that these men were not drunk, as they supposed, to show according to their own prophecies, the true character of that which had taken place. The signs of Joel 2 did not take place, nor was the Spirit poured upon all flesh, but it was of that character. Joel 2 will be fulfilled when Israel is restored to their land and to the Lord.

Thousands of these godly Jews heard this and were pricked to the heart, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

They must own with repentance the name of the crucified One before they could be forgiven or receive the Holy Ghost. We could not baptize any for this purpose now, as we shall see in Acts 10:43, 44.

There is no evidence here of any speaking with tongues except the preachers-no falling down, no screaming or indecent disorder; all was solid reality.

Notice also the hundred and twenty could not baptize themselves; they did not need that. They were the nucleus formed by the Spirit, into which the rest entered by baptism. (It is the house aspect.) The body is formed by God (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). Man cannot bring any into that body.

After the murder of Stephen, a great persecution began, and all the disciples were scattered abroad, except the apostles. They could not be a community any longer, with one purse; they could not wait any longer for the King to come back. They had to leave everything, but with glad hearts they preach the Word wherever they go. Philip, a deacon at Jerusalem, proves that he is an evangelist everywhere, and going down to Samaria he preached Christ unto them (Acts 8:5,6), and God confirmed the word by the miracles he did. (Hebrews 2:3 and 4 states God's use for miracles.) Then he baptized them all, both men and women, but none of them received the Holy Spirit till Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and prayed for them, and laid their hands on them; then they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14-17).

Here we must consider the antagonism of the Jew and the Samaritan to each other. God would not have two divided assemblies, two fellowships, for there is only one Spirit and one body (Eph. 4:4), and this was taught here in that God withheld the Holy Spirit till they are acknowledged one by the apostles' laying on of hands. God is careful that we should maintain the uniting bond of peace. This case is neither like Acts 2 nor Acts 10, as we shall see.

Here again we can notice the difference between the work of the Spirit in us, and the indwelling of the Spirit. The first gives life; the last gives us power to live and to enjoy the things of God, and to call God our Father.

Again, there is no mention of speaking with tongues among the converts. There is no mention of the eunuch receiving the Spirit. John 7:39 is enough to show that he was sealed. In Acts 9 we have the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Again we see the effect of the Word in the sinner in convincing him of his lost condition. This continued for three days, when he neither ate nor drank. Then the Lord, who spoke to him on the way to Damascus, sent a disciple called Ananias to him, who came in, laid his hands on him, called him "Brother Saul," and added, "The Lord, even Jesus... hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." The scales were gone, his sight came back, and he arose and was baptized.

In Acts 10 we have the Gentiles brought in. While they did not know salvation (like Abraham and other Old Testament saints), yet we see plainly something in them that was not the flesh; "devout" means "pious" or "godly," and Cornelius showed it in his works and prayers, which God accepted (see vv. 2, 4, 22). God gives Cornelius a vision, and Peter a vision, and prepares each for his part, overcoming Peter's scruples regarding the unclean Gentile, and preparing Cornelius and his company to hear the good news. This Cornelius is ready to believe at once, ready to receive Peter as God's messenger, and says, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." There is every mark here to show that he was already born again-

really converted long ago. But now something is

to be added; he is to hear of the work of Christ, and that "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." No sooner are the words uttered than they are believed, and no sooner believed than "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." They were sealed at once, united to Christ the Head in glory. They are members of His body, and children of God the Father. Peter, too, is astonished, and so are his company; but it is true, "on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." And this time they speak with tongues, and magnify God. They do not jabber or babble. It is intelligent worship to God, understood fully by those present. It was evidently to convince the Jews and Peter that God was also granting to the Gentiles repentance unto life. Again Peter uses the key, and in the name of the Lord commands that they be baptized.

In going over this narrative to the Jewish brethren at Jerusalem, Peter remembered the word of the Lord, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost," thus owning these Gentiles as one with those in Jerusalem or elsewhere.

In Acts 19 Paul meets twelve of John the Baptist's disciples who had not heard the gospel of the grace of God, nor did they know that the Holy Ghost was now dwelling in His house on earth. These were believing Jews, but they did not know the finished work of Christ, and were still on Jewish ground. Paul taught them to believe on Christ Jesus, the glorified One. They were baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul laid his hands on them, thus expressing their oneness with the Christians. Then the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Again, it is intelligent speaking, as the word "prophesying" shows.

These three cases of speaking with tongues are all that are in the Acts. In 1 Corinthians 14 we find the gift of tongues, but it is no mark of spirituality, and it was forbidden to speak with tongues unless there was someone to interpret. Paul spoke with tongues, but it is no mark of spirituality, and it was forbidden to speak with tongues unless there was someone to interpret. Paul spoke with tongues more than they all, but he would rather speak five words with his understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue (1 Cor. 14:18, 19).

Miracles, gifts of healing and diversities of tongues, are not of prime importance and are no mark of spirituality, as is seen in the Corinthians.

At the beginning, the word was confirmed by works of power (Heb. 2:3, 4). This had been done. Faith comes by hearing, not by seeing (John 2:23-25; 11:40).

A Separated People

Exodus 8:22, 23; Galatians 6:14-18

In Exodus 8 speaking to Pharaoh, God says that He "will put a division between My people and thy people." There is nothing so precious to God as His people, because they are brought to Him through Christ. God's searching eye finds satisfaction in His own people seen in Christ. Have you ever thought of God finding satisfaction in you? It is in His own people that the Lord has His portion. Pharaoh is typical of the prince of this world, and God says to him, "I will put a division [or a redemption] between My people and thy people." The cross of Christ is the basis of this division.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14.

The world lies guilty of crucifying Christ. If God has marked me out as separate to Himself, it is the cross that has done it. What a joy it is to be on the redemption side of the cross! "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them." Are we walking according to this rule?

"I bear in my body the marks [brands] of the Lord Jesus." Paul, as it were, says, "I have paid too great a price to bother with anything less than the Lord Jesus." How Paul had suffered for loyalty to Christ! We know how he was beaten, scourged, scarred. What a sight his back must have been! One time when he had been stoned, he was left at the roadside as though dead. Think of the shipwrecks he was in! If we could get before our souls that scene of Calvary as the measure of the cost of our redemption, what an effect it would have on us! He was willing to go into darkness for us, that we might ever be in the light.

Paul goes on to say, "None of these things move me." Not because I am a strong Christian, but because I have had a picture of the cross of Christ, and there was the end of these things. God has put a division between me and the world. Do we bear the marks of the Lord Jesus, not physically so much these days, but morally? It is a rejected Savior I must follow. The cross is the secret of deliverance from the world. You are spoiled for the world, and the world is spoiled for you. The cross of Christ will make the waters of this world bitter for you. How blessed to say, like Paul, I am through with the world. Lay hold on what is really life, and learn the joy, not the hardship, of living for Christ.

The Single Heart of Grace

A Few Thoughts on John 20 and 21

When a person is seen pursuing his way or his purpose, undaunted by resistance on the one hand, unseduced by solicitations on the other, we have a full witness of the singleness and devotedness of his soul to the business he has in hand. So likewise, when we see him refusing all occasions either to enrich or to display or to gratify himself, intent on the good of others, we have a like witness of the singleness and graciousness of his heart.

I judge that the way of the Lord after His resurrection, as recorded in these chapters, is of this second character. Occasions are used by Him only as serving the blessing and instruction of His saints, though they might naturally and without effort have ministered to Himself in one or other of these different ways.

His first appearing is to Mary. He reveals Himself to her as she was fondly mistaking Him for the gardener. The moment must have been very gratifying to Him. He was in company with something that was as dear to Him as the whole range of creation could afford—the affection and desire of a good soul, of one who at that moment, as He well knew, was counting His dead body more important to her than all the world beside. He does not, however, take up the occasion in this character at all. He does not indulge Himself through it. He does not linger where affection like this was gratifying His heart. He uses the occasion only for others, and sends the loving Mary away on a mission which was to bear light and joy to the hearts of others.

So in the next scene He joins the disciples and shows Himself to them. They are glad-glad with a human or natural joy. They receive Him, as of old, in their midst and, like Mary, were ready to gratify Him with every token and expression of attachment. But no; He will not meet them in such a place or in such a character. He came not to be indulged in the midst of such affections, pleasant as all that would have been to His heart of love. He at once blesses them, and prepares to make them a blessing to others. He causes them to know the peaceful fruit of His own accomplished travail, and bids them go forth and share it with others.

He dealt in the same spirit with Thomas afterward. The material here was different. Mary's fondness was gratifying to Him, but it could not detain Him from His purpose of blessing others; Thomas's slowness must have been contrary to Him, unattractive, uninviting. But neither could this hinder Him from doing the same gracious work. Simply to bless Thomas, He paid the disciples another visit; and when He had accomplished that, He left them as before.

A fourth occasion only, and perhaps even more illustriously, exhibits the same. The disciples go together to their former habit of fishing. They were on the lake where their Master had often resorted with them. And they are fishermen again. But Jesus is the same Jesus also. He takes them up, as of old, in the midst of their nets and their fishing, and gives them a draft again. Then, at the end, He pledges them a better service, a richer feast and companionship with Himself in all things.

He waits, however, on His business with singleness of heart. It is not to display, enrich, or gratify Himself that He is now in action. It is for us. For when we find Him here in possession of Peter's heart, He still uses it for others. "He saith unto him... Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" "Yea, Lord," says Peter. "Feed My lambs.... Feed My sheep," says Jesus. He uses His possessions for His poor people.

Such are the bright occasions which illustrate singleness of purpose-this devotedness to His business which marked and animated the mind and path of the Lord in these chapters. And they convince us that the resurrection had made no change in Him.

But further, the style of the Spirit in writing is just the same as this style in the Lord's acting. The Spirit might have recorded many other things if the object had been to display the Lord. See chapter 2:30 and 31. But this was not the object, and therefore this is not done. All that is done is to record what is enough to lead sinners to the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and thus to life through His name.

Blessed testimony! Blessed warrant for our souls to trust Him altogether! He goes on with His purpose to bless us, never using a single occasion to either enrich, display, or gratify Himself. I speak after the manner of men; but in all this I ask, Can anything more effectually lead the heart into confidence than this?

Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11

We have here a very special period of Church history. It may be called the persecution period. Taking the history of the Church as a whole, it covers about the first two centuries. During that time, under the Roman emperors, persecution constantly broke out, inflicted not by professed Christians, as happened later on, but by the heathen world.

The Lord reveals Himself here to His tried and persecuted people in a character that was specially calculated to sustain and strengthen their faith.

"These things says the first and the last, who became dead, and lived" (that is, after having died). J.N.D. Trans.

Deep and important truths which are constantly Satan's point of attack are wrapped up briefly in these words. In the first place, He who speaks is none other than God, for of God only can it be said that He is First and Last; God is unaffected by all time limits, and is beyond, as even He was before, all that pertains to time, whether it be prisons, persecution, or even death itself.

But more, He who here speaks, our adorable Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, was Man as truly as He was God-He "became dead." This was one of the reasons for which He took part of flesh and blood- He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." Heb. 2:9. But He was risen from the dead-He "became dead, and lived." How large the circle of truth contained in this short passage! The deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ. Glorious, amazing truths which may well bow the soul in worship, and sustain in danger's hour.

"I know thy tribulation and thy poverty; but thou art rich." J.N.D. Trans.

In the first place, it is to be observed that in this address to Smyrna there is nothing to condemn, no leaving of first love drawing forth a call to repentance. Persecution may limit the number of outward disciples, but it likewise induces intense reality in those who are true. There is no playing at being Christians when the fires of martyrdom are being lighted. It must be one thing or the other, but no neutrality, no half-and-half confession.

On the other hand, days of persecution are not days of great activity in Christian work; hence, in these addresses, "works" are left out. At Ephesus there were many works, but first love was wanting. At Smyrna hearts beat true to Christ, but "works" were not in any prominence. They were a poor and afflicted people, despised by the world, no doubt, and poor in the eyes of men, but in God's sight how rich!

But not only was there persecution from without, there were dangers within. The Judaizer's were at work in the midst of the assembly. This had been a source of trouble even when the apostles were alive. The epistle to the Galatians furnishes an inspired antidote to their pernicious teaching.

Very early came the effort to destroy the peace and liberty brought in through grace, and based upon the accomplished redemption at Calvary; but apostolic power was present to keep this in check (see Acts 15). No sooner, however, had the apostles been removed than these Judaizer's began to form themselves into a compact body.

"I know... the railing of those who say that they themselves are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan." J.N.D. Trans.

This that began so early has spread and spread to such an extent that it almost characterizes the whole Church. For we must remember that while each of the seven assemblies portrays successive stages, yet seeds of evil once implanted take permanent root.

In Smyrna we cannot say that those Judaizer's characterized the whole Church. There was the beginning of a system, small at first but rapidly to increase, which soon swamped the whole in legal bondage.

Are not masses of even true children of God today practically on Jewish ground? They are put under the law by their very religious exercises, and those who never were intended by God to be so are kept constantly groping in bondage and darkness. The sacerdotal and clerical system in vogue today is but a revival of Judaism. Here in Smyrna we see its commencement as a system-the formation of a party, a persecuting party, a veritable synagogue of Satan.

"Fear nothing of what thou art about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." J.N.D. Trans.

Dark days are in store. There were gathering clouds of trial and persecution. And yet by all this God was accomplishing His purposes of grace toward His people, recovering them from that fatal torpor of waning first love.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of life." J.N.D. Trans.

Martyrdom in some cases would take place. How graciously the Lord prepares His people for the coming storm! Sufferings they would have, imprisonment, too, all the malice of Satan let loose upon them, even a martyr's death-but, if so, they would have the martyr's crown, the crown of life. This was a special reward for faithfulness amid special circumstances of tribulation, and this reward will be bestowed upon multitudes who in after years, whether in the Middle Ages or more recently, have laid down their lives for Christ.

The promise to the overcomer in this case was of a special kind, and most suited to the martyr period.

"He that overcomes shall in no wise be injured of the second death." J.N.D. Trans.

Here we get the assurance in the very strongest language that death in its final form as the judgment of God would never be theirs. The unbelieving sinner who dies must die twice, and the second death will be his final doom-not extinction, not annihilation, but the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). But for the saint it will never be so. He may pass through tribulation, but the period is limited-"ten days"-it will not be the endless tribulation of the ungodly.

How comforting while passing through times of suffering for Christ's sake, to know that all is in God's hands, and even though persecuted, His people are never forsaken. How brightly the crown of life will shine on many a brow that now lies cold in death! How near a place will the crowd of martyrs have to Him who became dead but lives! What a special link will exist, and that forever, between Him who died in love to us, and those who have been actually and in their bodies conformed to His death! We shall not grudge them their special recompense.

Strength in Looking up

There is always strength in looking up to God; but if the mind rest upon the weakness rather than casting itself upon God, it becomes unbelief. Difficulties may come in. God may allow many things to arise to prove our weakness; but the simple path of faith is to go on, not looking beforehand at what we have to do, but reckoning upon the help that we shall need and find when the time arrives. The sense that we are nothing makes us glad to forget ourselves, and then it is that Christ becomes everything to the soul.

A Striking Contrast

Have you ever noticed the striking contrast between verses 19 and 22 in Luke 12, so instructive in the everyday life of a child of God? "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," (vs. 19) arising from much goods laid up for many years and "Take no thought," (vs. 22) nor be of doubtful mind, arising from the assurance of what your Father knows and is!

Two grand things should motivate us as Christians: one, that our Father in heaven takes thought of us; and the other, that our precious Lord is coming from heaven to take us there. Thus our faith has another horizon than sight and sense, one peculiarly all its own: our hearts treasure the Morning Star, and we cherish the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the Lord, whose day it is.

Till then, these things are at work in the inner man: the power of the Spirit whereby we are strengthened with might; loyalty and devotedness in the true confession of Christ Jesus the Lord; and the Father's love maintained in our hearts by the Spirit of adoption, the true spring of all loving obedience.

While in the world of which we form no real part, the only proper use we can now make of it is to shine as lights therein; and if there be a secondary one, it is to make it the place of the trial of our faith that it may be found unto "praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 1:7).

The Spirit's Dwelling Place

The Holy Ghost has made the Church of the living God His dwelling place, and His desire is the coming of Christ. He has the character of servant, till Christ comes. He will not be then, as He is now, the Comforter; the One who, in the absence of Christ, does as Christ would have done. He will not then be the Guardian taking care of the Church in the wilderness, but ever the power of life and enjoyment-the power that knits up all to Christ.

Their Joy

We know that a believer to whom death comes is instantaneously "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." But we have the same affections and emotions as those who are not believers, and when death comes to one we love, we cannot but feel keenly the loss to ourselves and others. Although we may not give expression to our feelings, we may still in our human failure secretly grudge the premature breaking of a precious bond, and grieve over the wrecking of our plans, the blighting of our cherished hopes. If we are to get rid of these depressing feelings, we should dwell on the bliss of those who are "with Christ, which is far better." How can we possibly grudge to any the bliss of being in the Lord's presence, no matter how much we miss them, nor how poignant and difficult the circumstances those left behind may be in?

There Is Nothing Better

"There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." I Sam. 27:1.

This was the language of David immediately after God had delivered him in a most remarkable manner from the hand of Saul. For a long while Saul had been hunting David from place to place with the full intention of putting him to death, and now, for the second time, God had put Saul into David's power so that, had David wished it, he could have taken Saul's life and put an end to his own dangers. But, as on the previous occasion, David refused to hurt the anointed king, and Saul was so touched by his magnanimity that he was constrained to say, "I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day." I Sam. 26:21. And in fulfillment of this promise, Saul abandoned his pursuit of David, and "returned to his place" (v. 25).

One would have thought that all this would have been the means of encouraging David's heart, and inspiring him with fresh confidence in God's watchful care of him. But strange to say, it was just the other way for the next chapter opens thus: "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." Think of it! The man who years before had gone out in the name of the Lord of Hosts to meet the giant champion of the Philistines, and had slain him, now says that there is nothing better for him than to seek a refuge among those enemies of the Lord and of Israel. Nothing better for him?—oh, what a little step there seems to be between faith's triumphs and a complete downfall! When the danger was pressing and imminent, David was cast upon God, and God delivered him: but as soon as the danger was withdrawn for a time, David began to look at circumstances and probabilities. "It is not to be expected," he seemed to say to himself, "that I shall always escape so fortunately. I shall be sure to fall into Saul's hands some day." Why so? Would the Lord change or cease to be able to protect His servant? Oh, no; but David was forgetting God now, and the next moment he was turning in heart to the Lord's enemies for help.

Has it never been so with us? In time of pressing need we have cast ourselves upon God, and He did not fail us, but when the pressure was past, we got our eyes off God and upon the difficulties. It seemed as though we could not always expect help and deliverance. Then we began to parley with sin, and to try and justify ourselves for yielding. "There is nothing better," we thought, than a compromise, and we settled down to a position that was wholly dishonoring to God. While the Lord lives and reigns, it is downright unbelief on our part that would lead us to be satisfied with anything short of a real and complete obedience. "There is nothing better" means, in effect, The Lord is no longer able to hold me up. May we learn to trust in the Lord at all times and in all circumstances. See Prov. 3: 5,6.

A Thorn for the Flesh: Discipline Suited for Individual Soul

All speculations as to what was the nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh end in nothing. God has wisely seen fit to leave it untold. Were it made known, we would have perhaps settled that it was not ours, and then have left it there. To have left it untold gives us to see that there was a great principle of God's dealings seen in this man's case, but applicable to all. Each would have his suited "thorn," the very thing that would counteract his natural tendency, and so act as to strip him of every pretension to power, and break any fancied strength of man.

We see this on every hand; we see it better in our own soul's history. For it is not always permitted for another to know the secret thorn which rankles in the breast, and which we would like to remove, ere we know the "end of the Lord." He presses home the "stake" which pins us to the earth, as it were, in powerlessness. You see this at times, for instance, in incongruous marriages. The soul is worn away, especially in a sensitive, spiritual mind; and there is no earthly power which can change the sorrow, and heavenly deliverance is withheld. Again, there is a child whose conduct breaks the heart of a parent; every measure fails in dealing with him and the "thorn" rankles deeply in the wounded heart. It may be that some disgrace is permitted, and the soul feels that death would be easier to bear. It may be that slander has stung the soul with deeper pain. There may too be some human weakness which renders the afflicted one an object of pain to those who love him, or of ridicule to others. Such as these, and the many sorrows of the way, are used of God as the "thorn" to curb the energy, to break the strength of "man". Circumstances, friends, relations, health, good name, are all touched by Wisdom in this holy discipline of the soul. These things in the hand of God are like the river banks which on either side guide the stream of waters which flow between them, rendering the waters useful and fruitful; which, if flowing onward without these guides, would devastate all around instead of bringing a blessing with them. Have we not often thought what good Christians we might have been if circumstances were different? In short, if the banks which carry the river were broken down. No, these are the wise dealings of our God to keep us just in the channel and path where we are, to shine for and glorify Him.

Like Paul of old when the "stake" was driven home, we may cry to God even thrice, as he did: Take away this thorn, this terrible hindrance to the work of Christ, this feebleness of the vessel, this sapping of energy, this hindrance to service, this cruel "stake" from which the soul struggles in vain to be free. But no; there it remains until we find in the acceptance of its bitterness the occasion of strength which is not of man, but which empties us of fancied human power. We learn our powerlessness; we feel that struggling is but in vain. Yet here the secret of strength is found, but not of man, not our own. The Lord comes in. He finds the vessel bereft of strength, prepared for that power with which He can wield it. He finds that condition which is His to use. "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses (it is not infirmities but weaknesses in which he glories), that the power of Christ may rest (tabernacle over) me." "The surpassingness of the power is of God, and not from us."

Those who publicly serve the Lord in the Word know in measure these things. They know well, much as they may be blessed and valued too, what bitter lessons they have to learn in secret with the Lord. They could never be explained to another; yet they are only the emptying of fancied strength in man. Every true servant will find this out for himself; he will recall those moments when death was working in the fragile vessel, that life might work in those to whom he ministered. Yes, he begins to find how good these lessons are that made room for the working of a power which he is conscious is not of himself, not of man; and that when he felt the abject weakness of his own heart, his Lord might step in and give him the victory.

Thus the vessel is brought by the hand of the Potter, often through bruising and breakings and crushings on the wheel, to its true and blessed form in which God Himself can work alone, when the vessel would say, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." And again, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." This is forcible and striking. He does not allow that the power would be from God, as something apart from Him and conferred or imparted to us. No, but it is divine and yet inseparable from Him who works; it is from God, and yet not of us, as not only denying the thought that it might be so; but the word he uses still more emphasizes this, that the power is of God and not from us.

There is a threefold cord which must be found in the saint if he would serve his Lord aright: the motive, the energy, and the end. At times the motive may be right, and the end also, but the energy may be but the human vessel working out (as it supposes) the things of the Lord. All three must go together, and this is the object of this disciplinary process, that all may be of God, and not of man.

Training Children

To instruct even an unconverted child in the Scriptures is of great value. It is like carefully "laying a fire" so that a spark alone is needed to kindle it into a flame. It is a good and wholesome thing for Christians to be most particular in the training of their children in a thorough knowledge of the Word of God.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6.

Trials of Faith

Matt. 15:21-28

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tiro and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matt. 15:21-28.

It is in Matthew's Gospel that we find this most instructive incident, which reveals the Lord not merely as the minister of circumcision for God's truth, but as the display of His sovereign grace where God's curse lay, and Satan's power.

The Lord withdrew from the proud religionists of Jerusalem who made void the law of God for the sake of their tradition. He also laid bare to the disciples that only the plants of His Father take root, while all that issues from man's heart is defiled and defiling. The sinner needs God's grace to save him. This is shown in the otherwise desperate case of the Canaanite, whose daughter was sorely possessed of a demon.

Through this incident, many a soul learns why the Lord does not accede to its appeal. Hers was deep and earnest, yet He answered her not a word. For what claims on the Son of David had a Canaanite woman? When He reigns, there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts (Zech. 14:21).

When the two blind men cried, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us," He touched their eyes, which were then opened according to their faith (Matt. 9:27-30; 20:30-34). But repentance has its place as truly as faith, and God will have the soul to judge itself aright. "Cursed be Canaan" is the word from of old, and yet, was she not now asking His pity who is to avenge and deliver Israel?

How many today have said the words, "Father... forgive us our sins"! Yet, they, too, have received no answer; nor would they assert or believe that their sins are forgiven. They have gone on wholly untenable ground. They are not His sons by faith in Christ. They are not born of water and Spirit. They stand on law, supplemented by ordinances. They are unrenewed, serving divers lusts and pleasures, a prey to the power of darkness. They do not cry to God and own the truth of their estate, but they imitate the language of disciples, which they, in heart, are not. Have we not experienced it ourselves? Our state was below the Canaanite's.

The woman of Canaan evidently knew that no Israelite ever appealed to Christ in vain. She had faith in Him, but she had overlooked her own dismal position. Theirs were "the promises"; but what did she have? Not promises, but a curse. And He who is the truth would have her feel it. The disciples would have Him dismiss her. This was far from His heart. They disliked the discredit of her importunity, and wished to be rid of her. He meant to bless her, but it must be in the truth, as well as the grace of God. For this He waited, and she, as yet, had no answer; but He answered them, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Now faith, where real, perseveres; and the woman came and did Him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He is, indeed, Lord of all-that is truth without assumption of privilege. To such an appeal, He does reply. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and give it to dogs."

Thus does His grace help her to see where she was lacking. The light of God shines into her heart, and she bows at once. For she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." She apprehends where and what she really was, and takes her true place before God. She had forgotten that she was not a "sheep", privileged to claim the succor of Israel's Shepherd, but was truly a "dog" before Him. Yet, while no longer hiding this from her soul, but confessing it freely, she rejoins, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

What refreshment such faith gave to our Lord Jesus! She savored the things of God. She appreciated, believed, enjoyed the grace of which she was the object. And the Lord owned her "great... faith," and gave her all she wished.

Unveiled Mysteries

It is often a great test for Christians to joyfully and gladly bear slander. It is hard for them to have so-called friends speak evil of them to others when they are standing firm and true for God. This is only until they love their Lord enough to enjoy suffering with Him. He was and is evil spoken of, and if we love Him above all else, we are glad for the privilege of sharing in His sufferings.

The Apostle Paul knew what it was to suffer for and with his Lord. He loved to be counted worthy of this and he said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12. He expected nothing else than to suffer for the One who suffered for him.

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed who suffer for Him. He said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Matt. 5:11, 12.

When the apostles were put in prison for Jesus' sake, they were happy. After they were taken from prison they were also beaten and told to speak no more in the name of Jesus. Do you think this made them sad? No; we read of them, "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Acts 5:41.

Peter was one of the apostles who rejoiced because he was counted worthy to suffer these things. He knew it brought him much joy to suffer for his blessed Lord, so later on he wrote to other Christians saying: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye." 1 Pet. 4:12-14.

So dear Christian, do not grieve or be sad when you are evil spoken of, but count it a joy, as Jas. 1:2 says. The Lord Jesus specially favors you when He allows you to bear suffering and shame for His sake. It is because He has set His love upon you, and because He would have you share in something so very precious.

The Upper Room

I would observe that 1 Sam. 4 and 7 remind us of the churches of Laodicea and Philadelphia in Rev. 3. The former presents to us a condition which we should carefully avoid; the latter, a condition which we should diligently and earnestly cultivate. In Laodicea we see miserable self-complacency, and Christ left outside. In Philadelphia we see conscious weakness and nothingness, but Christ exalted, loved, and honored; His Word kept and His name prized.

And let it be remembered that these things run on to the end. It is very instructive to see that the last four of the seven churches give us four phases of the Church's history right on to the end. In Thyatira we find Romanism; in Sardis, Protestantism. In Philadelphia, as we have said, we have that condition of soul, that attitude of heart which every true believer and every assembly of believers should diligently cultivate and faithfully exhibit. Laodicea, on the contrary, presents a condition of soul and an attitude of heart from which we should shrink with ever-growing intensity. Philadelphia is as grateful as Laodicea is loathsome to the heart of Christ. The former He will make a pillar in the temple of His God; the latter He will spew out of His mouth, and Satan will take it up and make it a cage of every unclean and hateful bird-Babylon! An awful consideration for all whom it may concern. And let us never forget that for any to pretend to be Philadelphia is really the spirit of Laodicea. Wherever you find pretension, assumption, self-assertion, or self-complacency, there you have in spirit and principle, Laodicea, from which may the good Lord deliver all His people!

Beloved, let us be content to be nothing and nobody in this scene of self-exaltation. Let it be our aim to walk in the shade as far as human thoughts are concerned, yet never be out of the sunshine of our Father's countenance. In a word, let us ever bear in mind that the fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel.

Wasted Years

We read that in the days of Hezekiah it took sixteen days to clear out the temple, because it had not been daily cleansed. Take heed that there is not an accumulation on the conscience of those who are "the temple of the living God" that must first be cleared out before the living God can be worshipped.

Waters of Quietness

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ." 2 Thess. 3:5
J.N.D. Trans.

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." So runs the witness of Rom. 5:5. It is God's own love to us, not our love to Him-love that towers high above all earthly love, however great. The love of friend for friend may be wonderful, as was the love of Jonathan for David; and the love of a mother for her child is tender and unwearied; but the love of God to us-His own love-is incomparably greater and is all the more beautiful in that there is nothing in us to call it forth. He loved us when we were sinners, and gave His Son to die for us.

We can never doubt that love as we gaze upon the cross. Love emptied itself there. It gave its all for us, for you and me.

What an answer this is to Satan's lie in the garden of Eden! There he succeeded in persuading Eve that God withheld something that would be good for her to have. Oh, what a harvest of sorrow and tears and anguish and death, has followed that disbelief of God's love! But that love, suspected and disbelieved in Eden, has displayed itself at Calvary. How? He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. There we learn the mighty, measureless love of God.

And this perfect love casts out fear. It must of necessity do so, for how could we be afraid of One who loves us with perfect love? Now God's love is perfect and holy; for He has taken notice of our sins, and shown His love in the very thing that has put those sins away. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10.

We would not want God to think lightly of our sins, nor would He if such were our wish. God abhors sin, and it is our joy and rest to see that all that was due to us and to our sins has been borne by God's own Son. The cross has put our sins away forever, and in accounts solemn and yet clear and sweet it tells us God is light and God is love.

But has that love which thought of our deep spiritual need and made such ample provision for us in Christ withdrawn its eyes from us, not caring to behold us again till we are seen in glory? Oh, no! The very hairs of our head are all numbered. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, are we not of more value than many sparrows?

It is into the present love of God-the love that cares for us today-that our hearts need to be directed, for it is there we may find rest, and nowhere else.

We know no yesterday but the cross, and no tomorrow but the glory; but then there is today- the wilderness and the things that surely come upon us there.

The power of God, like His love, is infinite. He is able to make the rough places smooth and never to suffer a thorn to pierce our foot. The knowledge of God's power is the very door by which Satan insinuates into the mind a doubt as to God's love. The soul reasons thus: If God loves me with a

Father's love, why does He not do this or that for me? Why do my prayers remain so long unanswered? It is not because God does not love you that the answer to prayer is slow in coming. God has lessons to teach which would never be learned if our will or our timing guided His hand. How much the beloved family at Bethany would have missed if Lazarus had not been suffered to go down to the grave!

What Is Wisdom?

We read that "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Prov. 4:7. There is no wisdom apart from Christ; He is the wisdom of God. When He is the controlling Object, every effect is wise. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Matt. 6:22. As the star guided the wise men, so we are guided by the One who absolutely controls us; we do not move without Him, and we are sure to find the wise way. The way of wisdom is pleasantness and peace. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after...to behold the beauty of the Lord." Psalm 27:4.

Thus Mary Magdalene was led into wisdom. She was in great distress, and there appeared to be no way out of it, but she persisted in the one thing. She wanted her Lord, and could not do without Him. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." John 20:13. She loved intensely, and she proved, "I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me." Prov. 8:17. She allows neither angels nor apostles to divert her from her one Object. She proved that wisdom will "bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her." Prov. 4:8.

Thus Mary of Bethany sat at His feet and heard His word; He was her Object. Martha loved Him, but she was occupied with her service toward Him, and thus lost the good part which shall not be taken away. When we find the Lord, we find our Solomon. We see His wisdom-heavenly things. His things are revealed to us as we are in communion. We are in the circle of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; we are colored and formed in this association to see clearly what suits Him. It is true wisdom when I can see the course for Him in a scene of darkness, pretension, and the form of godliness. I cannot know what suits Him in this scene if I have not been in company with Him, where everything is suited to Him, where wisdom is unhindered in its influence. Then I come into this scene, not occupied with or distracted by the things here, but, like Moses coming down from the mount, or Mary of Bethany from His feet, or Mary of Magdala from His side, to declare and present that which is suited to Him, introducing an entirely new order of things into the midst of the confusion and disorder here.

No one has wisdom now but the one who knows what suits "the Christ." No one can truly be wise now according to God unless he has definitely before him the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

When the Lord is the one Object of the soul, not only is one led to act in every step for Him, but there is a very marked effect in oneself. With Israel, where the cloud was, there was the manna. They watched for the cloud, and then they surely found the manna. So it is with us. The more the Lord is before my heart, the more I am rewarded by His present favor. If I can say, "My soul followeth hard after Thee," I can surely add, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." And that is not all. I become a body of light; I become characteristic and demonstrative of the peace that governs me in my conduct and ways. I have "the wisdom that is from above...first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Surely, blessed Lord, we can say of Thy wisdom, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon

her: and happy is every one that retaineth her." Prov. 3:18.

When I See the Blood

"When I see the blood, I will pass over." It is not a question of my value of that blood, but the conscience rests on the value God finds in it. God looking upon the blood cannot see sin. My heart wants to value it more, but the question is, How could I be in the presence of God with a spot upon me? God looks on that blood and, if He looks on the blood, He cannot look on the sin; if He did, He would not value the blood. Where is the blood? It has been presented to God, not to man, and God has accepted it. It is impossible that God can impute sin to a believer; it would be slighting the blood of Christ.

When They Had Dined

John 21:15-22

Following upon the scene at the lakeside, the disciples, when they come to land, find a fire of coals, fish laid thereon and bread, and an invitation to come and dine. Rich provision had been made for their needs, apart from all their efforts.

When they had dined we have the closing scene in which Peter and John again have a special place, and for the fifth time John is described as the disciple whom Jesus loved (v. 20). First we have the Lord's tender dealings with the man that trusted in his own love. Peter, who had said he was ready to go with the Lord to prison and death, had found that he was not ready to stand before the simple question of a serving maid. But of the actual denial, no word is said in this touching scene. The solemn breakdown had been dealt with between the Lord and His servant in a private interview. All we know of that interview is the statement of the eleven, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," confirmed long after by the Apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians that the risen Christ "was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve." Wonderful love that with tender mercy gave the first interview to the most failing disciple!

If, however, in the first interview his conscience was relieved, in this scene his heart is restored. There the Lord had dealt with the outward failure; here He deals with the inward root that caused the failure. The root was confidence in his love to Christ, and the threefold question thoroughly exposes this root. It is as if the Lord said, "After all that has happened, do you still maintain, Peter, that you love Me more than these?" With the second question, the Lord says nothing of the other disciples. It is simply now, "Lovest thou Me?" With the third question, the Lord, using a different word, asks, "Art thou attached to Me?" (J.N.D. Trans.) By his third answer Peter puts himself entirely into the Lord's hands, saying, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee." It is as if Peter said, "I cannot trust my love, or talk of my love or what I will do, but Lord, You know all things, and You know my heart; I will leave You to estimate my love and tell me what to do."

No longer is Peter telling the Lord in self-confidence what he is capable of. Rather it is the Lord, in infinite grace, telling His restored disciple what He will enable him to do. The Lord, as it were, says, "You no longer trust in your love to do great things for Me; you have left it to Me; then go forth and 'Feed My sheep' (v. 17); 'Glorify God' (v. 19); and 'Follow Me' (v. 19)."

The Lord seems to say, "There was a time when you thought you loved Me more than these other disciples; now go forth and show your love by feeding My sheep that I love. You thought to glorify yourself above others by prison and death; now go forth to prison and death to glorify God, and when all is over down here, still follow Me far into the depths of glory where I am going." May we say that not the least wonderful of all the wonders of the Lord's life is the way He deals with a failing disciple?

But what of John? "Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following." The man who trusted in his own love and had broken down, needed restoring grace, and the exhortation, "Follow Me." Not so the man who was resting in the love of the Lord, for he was "following."

Thus, in the disciple whom Jesus loved, we see set forth the blessed results that follow for those who rest in the love of the Lord. They

Dwell in nearness to, and intimacy with, the Lord;

Are ready to be used in the service of the Lord; Will make spiritual progress;

Will have spiritual discernment; and

Will follow close to the Lord.

May it be our happy portion, like the bride of the Song of Solomon, to say, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." If we can say little of our love to Him, we can safely boast of His love to us. It is the privilege of the youngest believer to say, "I am a disciple whom Jesus loves," and the oldest and most advanced disciple can say nothing greater, for all blessing is found in His all embracing love which led Him to die for us, so that we, too, might go forth, in our small way, to feed His sheep, to glorify God, and to follow Him into the glory where He is gone.

Which Are You?

Some years ago a dear old Christian who traveled for a large English firm, found it necessary to go into a district in the far East, where he had not been previously. He was earnest and devoted to the Lord's work, in his own quiet way "buying up opportunities." Knowing an earnest young Christian who was well acquainted with the district into which he was going, he asked him if he would kindly give him some names and addresses of the Lord's people in those parts. He replied that he certainly would.

When the list was received, the older one was puzzled on looking it over at seeing either "O and O" or "H and H" opposite each name. He asked the other whatever "O and O" or "H and H" meant. The one who made out the list answered, "Some are only 'Half and Half' Christians, and others are 'Out and Out' ones, and I put those marks to distinguish them."

Dear reader, are you the Lord's? If so, which are you, "O and O" or only "H and H"?

The time is short, and remember the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich (in all the glory which He had with the Father before the world was) yet for our sakes He became poor (even shedding His precious blood on Calvary's cross to make us His own and fit us for Himself) that we through His poverty might be rich.

Why Does Man Hate the Bible?

"That book," said a scoffer one day, speaking of the Bible, "is not fit to be read to my children." Would it not have been better if he had paused a moment and asked, "If all the truth of my own history had been written down, would it be fit to read to my children?"

Why does man hate the Scriptures so much? "It is a collection of fables," he says. But this cannot be the real reason, for if you accept this charge, Esop and others have before now made a collection of fables, and he does not hate them. "It is only a history," he says, "and there are mistakes in it." But even if this were true, why do not other histories get a share of his hatred? "It has so many contradictions in it." How glad he seems to be when he thinks he has found one. But it is easier to make the charge of a so-called contradiction than to honestly point it out.

But if he actually found a thousand (in reality he cannot find one), it would be no reason for these strong feelings of undisguised bitterness. He says the story of Jesus Christ is only a myth, that He never existed as He is spoken of in the Bible, that the Bible statements are not true. But people do not get angry about Greek mythology; they do not get madly excited over the stories of Jupiter or Hercules, because they are not true. Oh, no, all this fault-finding lacks the clear ring of genuine honesty. The true reason must be sought elsewhere. "Thy word is a... light unto my path," said David (Psalm 119:105), and "Men have loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light that his works may not be shown as they are." (John 3:19, 20 J.N.D. Trans.) This is the true secret.

A farmer once said that he had not opened the Bible for nearly twenty years-that he dare not do it. Every page seemed to condemn him.

The Word of God is as the eye of God upon the soul of man, and because he cannot bear it, he tries his utmost to set it aside and get rid of it.

Wisdom and Strength

"Be strong in the Lord." You have no strength and no wisdom, but Christ is made unto us of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Satan works in two ways-to get us to confide in our own strength, or in our own wisdom. The first of these is seen at Ai (Joshua 7: 3, 4). The spies said, It is only a little city; do not let all the people go wearying there; a few hundred will do. The Gibeonites demonstrate the second (Joshua 9:3-27). "They did work wilyly"-as it says in Ephesians 6, "the wiles of the devil." They came and spread their old garments and moldy bread before the princes, and they were deceived. Had they laid some before the common people, they might have said, Let us ask the Lord about it. But the princes believed them, and a source of mischief was introduced which lasted until the days of Saul.

We need to have on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand (Ephesians 6:11), for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but our conflict is with the universal lords of the darkness of this world-against wicked spirits in heavenly places. Why do we often feel depressed? Why are we often cast down? It is the pressure of what is 'hove. What are we thinking about all day? Satan is seeking to draw us off by occupying us with the things around us, but God did not mean our minds to be a playground for Satan. It is an evil day we live in-a sad, sorrowful day-whose special characteristic is, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

The armor is not against God, but against Satan. The first thing in the armor is "truth." The loins are the place of strength. The truth is to be the girdle for the motives, the affections of the soul. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Hebrews 2:11. "As He is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4:17. Do you believe that the Father's love rests on you as it does on His Son?

"The breastplate of righteousness" is next. This is practical righteousness-a good conscience. Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." Acts 24:16. He could look up to heaven and say, "I know nothing by [against] myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Corinthians 4:4. Beloved, we do not want to go on covering up sin. Have you little tricky ways in your business? If so, Satan will succeed in shutting your mouth. He will make a coward of you and put you out of the conflict altogether.

"Having... your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We are to let the peace of Christ preside in our hearts, and to have the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeping our hearts and thoughts. Should any one of us be a trial to our brethren? No; we should rather be full of graciousness and gentleness. We ought to be the best husbands and wives, the best parents and children, the best masters and servants.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth He was surrounded by a little company among whom were discontent and murmurings, envyings and strifes. On one well-known occasion they were walking by the way, and seemed to have lingered somewhat behind from following Him. I have no doubt

He in His blessed grace waited for them, and when they came to Capernaum He said sweetly to them in the house, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" They were silent for they were ashamed; they had been disputing who was greatest among them, as they did afterward in Luke 22. And then He taught them a blessed lesson-that the way to go up was to go down, even as He Himself was doing, going down to the darkness of the cross; and God has exalted Him.

"The shield of faith"-what is this? It is not the faith that saves; it is trust, confidence in God, which is one element of faith. The fiery darts are infidel thoughts, but falling on the shield of faith they are quenched. "And take the helmet of salvation."

Then there is one offensive weapon, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The Word of God can only be wielded in the power of the Spirit. Cleverness will not do, nor intelligence. Satan will come to us with his "ifs" as he did to Eve in the garden of Eden. When Satan came to the Lord in the desert, and took Him up and set Him down on a high part of the temple, and said, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee," He said, "It is written... Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." What a lesson to us! How often souls twist that passage.

The last thing is prayer. Do we pray not only for individuals, or for meetings near us, but for all saints throughout the wide, wide world? Paul said he had great conflict for the saints-"agony" is the word. When we are in our agony, is it not generally about our own little troubles and trials?

Women of Scripture: Achsah

We are told very little about this daughter of Israel, but I think we may learn much from what is written in Joshua 15:16 and Judges 1:12, remembering that all Scripture has a voice to us, if only we have a ready ear and an understanding heart.

Achsah was the daughter of Caleb, the man of faith, who could say without boasting that “he wholly followed the Lord his God.”

The consequence was that there was no halting or wavering in him; instead, he possessed that keen purpose of heart that made him superior to apparently insurmountable obstacles and difficult circumstances, maintaining him steadily in the pathway of God’s will for His people until he ultimately became a victor and an overcomer. His words of encouragement to his dispirited brethren, “The Lord is with us: fear them not,” tells us the secret of his strength.

We are not surprised that Achsah proves herself a true daughter of this spiritual giant. She is given by Caleb as a bride to her cousin Othniel, when by his dauntless bravery he captures the stronghold of Kirjath-sepher from the enemy, thus proving himself a fitting partner for her.

He seemed as keen as his uncle in making his own the inheritance God had given His people to possess. He was thus training for his later important position when he became Israel’s deliverer and judge for forty years, during which time God’s people had rest from the constant harassing attacks of their surrounding enemies. It is on the occasion of her presentation as bride to the returning conqueror, that Achsah shows that the present possession and enjoyment of the blessing of God has the first place in her heart also.

At her father’s hand she had already received an inheritance, the south land, which without water would be unproductive and unfruitful. Therefore, she makes a further request: “Give me a blessing...give me also springs of water.”

She goes a step further than the daughters of Zelophehad. They asked for an inheritance; Achsah has an inheritance, and requests, in effect, that which will make it a present source of satisfaction and pleasure to her. It only needed the bubbling springs of living water, upper and lower, so readily granted, to make the inheritance everything she wished it to be to her—a source of constant joy.

If we have committed ourselves to Christ and form part of that bride given to Him, the true Overcomer of the world, we have an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven. It is God’s will that we should be in the present enjoyment now of that heavenly inheritance and the blessings connected with it, which are centered in Christ at His right hand. The mere knowledge of this, however, will not bear fruit, nor bring joy to our own hearts unless made good to us by the power of the Holy Spirit—“the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:14). We, unlike Achsah, do not need to ask to receive, for as a wondrous gift from God He is sent to indwell all believers since the Lord has been glorified.

You will remember what the Lord said to the Samaritan woman: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). And again, in John 7:38-39 He says to the Jews, "He that believeth on Me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." It is for us to see to it that there is nothing in our life and ways that would grieve the Holy Spirit, and thus hinder Him from making the abiding joys of heaven so real to our souls that we anticipate them now, entering into those marvelous things that "eye hath not seen, no ear heard," but which God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit. It is only by His power that these things afford us real joy, or are made fruitful to our souls; without this our heavenly inheritance affords us little pleasure.

May we each, as man's day is fast hastening to its close, and Christ's return draws nigh, be so subject to God's Holy Spirit that we may increasingly enter into and enjoy by His power the reality of our portion in Christ, until that moment in actuality we shall possess it to the full in His presence.

Women of Scripture: Daughters of Zelophehad

What a mark of distinction for five sisters to have their names recorded four times over by God in His scriptures! You will find them in Numbers 26:33; Numbers 27:11, Numbers 36; and Joshua 17:3-6. We may well mention them here-Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.

And why were they thus honored? It was just this: their hearts were set on enjoying to the full the present possession of the inheritance Jehovah had for His people, and this delighted His heart. They grasped what His will was for Israel-the immediate possession of the promised land-and although, as yet, no provision was made by law for them, being women, their hearts were so set on having a part in the division of the land that they bring their cause to Moses. He willingly makes their request known to God, and an immediate answer of definite approval is the result. "The Lord spake." He deigns to voice a distinct command, promising the fulfillment of the desires of these zealous maidens of Israel. "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren." Numbers 27:7. This divine declaration is ratified by a new statute providing the same privilege for all Israelitish women in the same circumstances. They were anxious to continue their father's name in their tribe, as he had no son to succeed to his inheritance. How this shows God's entire appreciation of any individual heart-response to the blessings His love has provided for His own!

Now, for His heavenly people, God has "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." 1 Peter 1:4.

Does this appeal to the hearts of us who are His? Do we desire, through faith and by the Spirit's power, to enjoy the possession in our souls of its joys now? Oh, that it may be so!

These women belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, and their purpose of heart is in striking contrast to the half-heartedness of the other half tribe that requested that they might have their inheritance on the east side of Jordan (Numbers 32). They were content with possessions, wealth and pleasures on this side of Jordan, and when the heads of families themselves crossed the Jordan to help their brethren conquer the land, they left all they held dear behind. When the warfare was over and rest was in view, they returned, leaving the place where the Lord's presence was known and the fellowship of their brethren, to enjoy the life they had chosen for themselves, separated from the Lord and the rest of His people.

What a solemn lesson for us! Is there any danger of our hearts being held by the pleasures and prosperity of this scene which must be terminated by death, when it is our privilege to have our treasure and inheritance above, beyond the reach of death, and our hearts set on them there?

When it came to the actual division of the land by Joshua, the five sisters again came forward to claim their promised possessions. Did the Lord consider an inheritance with their brethren on the east of Jordan good enough for them? No, indeed! God never disappoints hearts that are in harmony with His will, and that desire to enjoy and appreciate His blessings for them. Referring to Joshua 17:5-7, we learn distinctly that the portion of the sisters was in the land on the west of

Jordan. We read (v. 6), "The daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead" (east of Jordan).

Notice another important thing: God makes a stipulation to which they agree and closely adhere. They may marry whom they see fit, but it must be in their own tribe. In other words, their affections and relationships must be subject to and suitable to their destiny. They must in no way mar their inheritance or interfere with their enjoyment of it.

In forming new relationships, let us see to it that they are "in the Lord," and then they will not lessen, but rather strengthen, our enjoyment of the joys which the Lord desires we should possess in spirit here and now.

Women of Scripture: Hannah

1 Samuel 1 and 2

Hannah was sad and tried, or as she describes herself, was “a woman of a sorrowful spirit.” Naturally, there was plenty of reason for her sorrow. She had a deep longing in her heart which was, as yet, ungratified, and in addition, the adversary used Peninnah to further try her with unkind taunts and teasing speeches.

Even the love of her devoted husband could not bring permanent sunshine into her life, and we are introduced to her in all her sadness and depression. However, although she does not know it, God has His eye on her for blessing. Her weeping may indeed endure for a night, but she is to prove that “joy cometh in the morning.”

The sorrow of unfulfilled desire is too deep to confide to an earthly friend, but Hannah turns to the Lord, whose sympathies fail not, and in the bitterness of her soul, and with the burning tears of a wounded spirit, she pours out her heart to Him in prayer. A special opportunity is afforded her for this when she accompanies her husband Elkanah and the provoking Peninnah to Shiloh for the yearly worship and sacrifice to Jehovah. Here, in the depths of her earnestness, she requests the Lord to remember her, and give her a son, whom she promises to give back to Him for His service as long as he lives.

His eye was upon this poor, sad woman, and He would not let her be crushed with over-much sorrow, but in answering her request according to His infinite wisdom, He was about to bring such rejoicing into her heart as would tune it to lofty praise in one of the most beautiful inspired songs on record. Who teaches like Him? Can we think that her daily trial and burden of heart was unnecessary when, under the training hand of God, it was productive of such results?

When looking back upon the trial Hannah could say, “The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by His actions are weighed” (1 Sam. 2:3). She realized then that He had been training her all the time, that every unkind action of her tormentor, and every action of hers, were all noticed and estimated at their right value by Him. Then when patience had had its perfect work, He came in to deliver.

The Lord granted her request, and in due time little Samuel (asked of the Lord) is born, bringing joy and gladness to the heart that had known so much weeping.

I believe the Lord continued to teach Hannah much of Himself during those two or three years of seclusion with her infant son, for what she desires for him speaks eloquently of what the presence of the Lord had become to her own soul. When the infant Samuel is weaned, she brings him to the tabernacle that “he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever.” What greater ambition could she have for her child than that he should abide in the sunshine of the Lord’s presence? Could she wish it for him unless she had proved something of the sweetness of it herself?

How gladly did she “lend” her precious gift to the Lord, little realizing how He would use him to stand for Him and for the truth in a day of Israel’s deep departure. At this time the priesthood was

marred by such wickedness that the offerings of the Lord were actually held in abhorrence by the people, the priests thus acting as a barrier between the Lord and His people instead of drawing their hearts more closely to Him.

The Lord, therefore, not only became the timely Deliverer of the downcast Hannah, but, in lifting her up from the depths of sorrow and granting her petition, He became the sadly-needed Deliverer of His backsliding people Israel, by raising them up a prophet and spiritual leader in Samuel. We have only to read Hannah's beautiful song carefully to see how full she is of the Lord and all He has wrought. And no wonder! She has proved Him for herself, and found Him to be far better than her highest expectations.

Have we so learned Him? If not, may we prove Him now. He loves to be confided in, and the result will not be less blessed than that experienced by Hannah.

Women of Scripture: Miriam

A carefully made, covered cradle of rushes, with a helpless baby in it, rocking among the reeds of the ancient Egyptian Nile, is the object of God's deep interest and solicitude, of a mother's steadfast faith, and of a sister's watchfulness. God's purposes with regard to the future of His chosen people, their release from bondage and their safe conduct to the land of promise are centered in that little three-month-old baby.

He was to be Israel's deliverer and leader, and his mother Jochebed seems wonderfully taught of God when she accepts for her child what so vividly spoke of death, putting full confidence in the God of resurrection and power. In the dignity of faith she commits her little son to the waters of death and calmly waits for God to work. There is no nervous hurry, worry or excitement. Her trust is in Jehovah, and nothing seems to shake it.

Miriam, Moses' elder sister, was standing "afar off" to see what would happen to her little brother. Although perhaps she possessed not the far-seeing faith of Jochebed that pierced the gloomy clouds of oppression and cruelty weighing so heavily upon God's people at this time, she was not too far off for God to use her in the furtherance of His purposes, and she is ready when the moment comes for her to act.

It is a very great honor to be used of God in the carrying out of the smallest part of His all-wise plans, and for this we need to have His mind about things and to take stock of everything from the divine standpoint. By nature we have a warped, exaggerated vision. How much we need to be taught of God-even how to stand and wait.

Miriam stands and waits to some purpose. She watches the finding of her baby brother by the Egyptian princess, and then, with a God-given thought, she hastens to the royal lady's side. May she find a nurse for the child among the Hebrew women? This is God's ordering, and the hearts of all are in His hand, so a ready assent is given. Miriam's heart directs her feet and she hastens to fetch her mother, which results in the fact that her dearly-loved babe is given back to her tender nurture and training, and with him the wages- that which will provide for every temporal need.

That is how God rewards faith-faith being His own gift. Oh! to have to do with such a God of love, for He is the same today-"Changeless through all the changing years."

Miriam, having fulfilled her part, disappears from view, and many years elapse before we meet with her again. Doubtless all this time she was being taught by God for the part she had yet to fill, which was by no means an unimportant one. She had evidently linked herself with the people of God in a marked way and was looked up to by them, for she is introduced to us in Exodus 15:20 as "the prophetess, the sister of Aaron."

From this we gather that she was used of the Lord to reveal His mind to, and instruct in His ways, at least the women of Israel, over whom she seemed to have influence.

When Moses and the children of Israel, exulting in their wonderful deliverance from Egypt and from their enemies the Egyptians, sing that beautiful song of triumph to the Lord, it is Miriam who, stirred by the glorious words, leads forth the women to join the wondrous song and swell the chorus, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously."

Thus, at the outset of the wilderness journey, in company with the Lord's redeemed people, with their enemies dead behind them, the deep waters of the Red Sea between them and the land of their bondage, with the Lord's presence with them in the visible pillar of the cloud to be their guide and protection, she can lead the Lord's praises in notes of triumphant song.

If we know what it is in our souls to be in Miriam's position of victory, we too shall have to sing His praises, not with voice only, but from the depths of our adoring hearts.

The beautiful song itself we cannot here consider in detail, but the close of it is grand—the inheritance, the sanctuary and the Lord's everlasting reign. Oh, that this might have been the closing act of Miriam's life!

But there is another picture, and a very sad one, portrayed for us in Numbers 12. Miriam and her brother Aaron speak against Moses for an act which they consider to be unseemly, throwing doubt on his God-given leadership, thus manifesting jealousy and insubordination in a very sad way.

What a sad example to the congregation, and how their conduct added to the burden of their brother's already strenuous life!

This was most displeasing to God, who would not allow this evil spirit to continue for a moment. It is very beautiful to see how the Lord comes in and vindicated Moses as His servant above reproach.

As a mark of His deep displeasure the Lord afflicted Miriam, the instigator of the evil speaking, with leprosy, thus showing her and all the congregation how sinful her action was in His sight. It was only upon Aaron's confessing and judging the sin, and Moses' earnest prayer on her behalf, that the Lord healed her.

The solemn impress of the Lord's hand of chastisement was felt by the whole congregation, for they "journeyed not" until Miriam was again restored to the camp in health. How deep and far-reaching is the effect of sin!

How careful we should be to have everything open to the sight of "Him with whom we have to do." "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23, 24.

Women of Scripture: Sarah

Sarah was a remarkable woman. We can profit by considering the growth of her soul as taught by God.

The first time that Sarah acts independently is recorded in Genesis 16, when, too impatient to await the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that they should have an heir, and evidently faithless with regard to it, she suggests to her husband that he should take her Egyptian maid to be his wife. We are told in Galatians 4:24, 25 that Hagar represents the covenant made on Mount Sinai-the law-and this speaks to us of bondage.

Abraham yields to Sarah's suggestion, and faith for the time gives place to nature.

Nature finds its resources and even its religion in things down here quite apart from God, in contrast to faith which makes God, who is the source of its very existence in a soul, the center of everything.

Is Sarah alone in this phase of unbelief? If we challenge our own hearts, how often must we plead guilty to the temptation of seeking some relief from pressure, or some way out of a difficulty, by having recourse to this world and to the things of this life.

What a slight upon the God who has given us so many proofs of His love, faithfulness and wisdom! If we know Him in any measure, we are without excuse. Sarah had not the full revelation that has been made known to us, and it does not appear from the text that she was even present when the promise was made to Abraham. Thus she missed the faith-inspiring object lesson of the star spangled heavens, and the deep, solemn, soul teaching of the night's watch by the sacrifice. (See Genesis 15:4-18.) Her sad act of unbelief, however, cannot fail to bring sorrow and discord in its train, and this soon becomes evident.

Sarah is despised by Hagar, and harshness ensues in consequence on Sarah's part, so that Hagar flees. But she is not allowed to remain away. Sarah has lessons to learn through Hagar's presence in her home, so God, who is just as interested in Sarah's spiritual growth as in Abraham's, sends her back. It must have been a trial to Sarah when Ishmael was born, and a test during the fourteen years he and his mother remained in the home. But Sarah was doubtless in the school of God all this time, for we do not read of any more quarrels, although she laughed in derision when the heavenly strangers reiterated God's promise, giving all the full details connected with it. (See Genesis 18.) Unbelief still! How loath we are to believe divine statements when they are contrary to nature, forgetting that "with God all things are possible." When faith is not in exercise in a believer, there is something in him that is hindering, because there are no hindrances on God's side. How aptly does Eliphaz put the question to Job: "Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?" I think we shall find that this was the case with Sarah. On two occasions she and her husband acted in a deceitful manner, so that, though knowing more of God, and taking a higher ground than those around them, they are reproached and reprovved by them. Let us beware, as Christians, of giving occasion to those about us to

blaspheme the name of Christ.

Abraham's excuse for their behavior to Abimelech in Genesis 20:11-14 tells of a secret arrangement made between Sarah and himself when he first responded to God's call. In spite of a fuller revelation of God to them as time went on, they still harbored this evil thing and had recourse to it, and of this we have a twofold account. (See chapters 12 and 20.) How soul-deadening! No wonder that faith is fettered! Let us carefully avoid secret sins, always seeking to live transparently before God and man, for it is the only path in which fruit can be borne to Him and blessing can accrue to us.

But now let us pass on to a brighter picture. In Hebrews 11:11 we read, "Through faith also Sara herself received strength... and was delivered of a child... because she judged Him faithful who had promised." We are not told how God worked in her soul to accomplish this marvelous change, but her faith and hope is now entirely and firmly placed in Him, and she trusts Him implicitly.

She has, at last, come to the end of herself, and has discovered her own utter weakness and resourcelessness. When she was acting for herself, everything went wrong and only brought bitter disappointment. God must undertake everything for her if His promise is to be made good in her, and "she judged Him faithful who had promised."

When we reach this point and leave self out of the question, there is no longer any hindrance to our progress in God's things, because the wisdom of the One who has our training in hand is infinite, and "Who teacheth like Him?"

God's promise is fulfilled, and Isaac, the child so long waited for, is born. Sarah now seems almost to outshine Abraham. He names the child at God's direction (see Genesis 17:19), but Sarah shows intelligence and interprets it. She seems to recognize what springs of refreshment and joy she has in Isaac, for she says, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." Genesis 21:6.

What a contrast to her laugh of unbelief behind the tent door! This is the pure laugh of the deep joy of fulfilled desire and faith in God, and it bears its testimony. It is a case of "my cup runneth over."

Do we know anything of this joy in a spiritual sense? We all know that Isaac is a very distinct type of Christ. Is our appreciation of Him so great that He has become the source of a deep joy that no one can deprive us of, and that, bubbling up and over, ministers refreshment to those about us, and becomes the source of true fellowship? Sarah says, "all that hear will laugh with me."

One step further Sarah goes. She now has faith in God, an awakened and intelligent heart that can fully appreciate Isaac, but He must be supreme. He must have no rivals. Now is the time for decision, and Sarah is ready for it. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son" is the advice she gives Abraham, and Ishmael has to go. There is no place for the flesh when faith is in activity and Christ is truly appreciated. God has put a wonderful seal to this decision of Sarah's, and honored it in a very special way. In Galatians 4:30 we read, "What saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman," etc. Sarah's actual words are quoted, and God deigns to call them "scripture," clearly showing that she had His mind in her decision, and that her action met His approval.

May we each imitate Sarah, and seek that Christ shall have the supreme place in our hearts.

Women of Scripture: the Call of Rebekah

Genesis 24

We have doubtless often heard servants of the Lord speak very beautifully of Rebekah as a type of the Church-the bride of Christ-in that she was attracted by the message of the servant (the Holy Spirit) and conducted by Him across the desert to Isaac (the type of the risen One) to be his bride, joy and comfort.

This is too vast a subject to be dealt with in this short article, so we will consider Rebekah rather in an individual way. We should read Genesis 24 carefully, where Rebekah first comes into prominence, since the details are so beautiful and full of instruction.

Eliezer, sent by Abraham to secure a wife for Isaac from among his kinsfolk in Mesopotamia, crosses the desert and reaches the gates of the city of Nahor in safety. Making a halt by a well he lifts his heart in prayer to God for guidance as to his choice among the maidens of that place. In immediate answer to his prayer, Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, comes out of the city with her waterpot to draw water from the well, and to Eliezer's wonderment and joy fulfills the special sign he had asked of God. How simple is a life of trustful dependence upon God! Oh that we knew more about it, especially in these difficult, complicated times! Rebekah receives the gifts offered by Eliezer, possibly in recognition of her willing services; but what seems to have more weight with her is what he has to tell of the ways of the God of glory with the family in the distant land. She silently listens to Eliezer's heartfelt thanksgiving to God for thus hearing prayer and prospering his journey; and she hastens home and tells all she has heard. As a result the servant is entertained by her parents and her brother Laban, whose covetous soul seems greatly stirred by the sight of his sister's jewels.

During Eliezer's short stay, Rebekah learns more of God and His goodness to her relations, so when the call came to her it found her ready. The simple and yet searching question, "Wilt thou go with this man?" was responded to with the equally straightforward and unhesitating answer, "I will go."

This beautiful reply is only possible from one to whom the God of glory has in some measure been revealed! Rebekah was no poor, homeless maiden, and the choice was not made between poverty and loneliness, and love and plenty. She possessed home, friends and wealth, and these would have remained to her had she decided to stay. What, then, could have been the power that attracted a girl to leave all she had hitherto held dear, to undertake a long, weary desert journey, with all its attendant heat and discomfort, accompanied by a strange escort, to a strange country and to a people unknown except in name? Years previously the God of glory had called Abraham from the same locality, and, constrained by divine power and in response to the call, he had started out on an altogether untried path. That path proved to be in his case, as it always must be, a path to certain blessing. Now a similar call had come to Rebekah, and with it, however detaining and hindering the earthly ties, came power to obey from the same Lord of glory. I think the report

of the servant had much more weight with Rebekah than the gifts he conferred upon her, and learning thus something of the blessing in the far-off country in which she is invited to participate, she is impelled by an unseen power to follow in the footsteps of the one who was first called, and so is "blessed with faithful Abraham."

What a mighty detaching and attracting power is that of the Lord of glory! Do we know anything about it, dear reader? If not, we are still very far from blessing. The sad thing is that to so many the call seems to come in vain. May none of us be found among such, but like Rebekah, respond willingly to the call of God and enter into the circle of true blessing.

Rebekah knew very little as yet of Isaac, the type of the risen One, whose bride she was destined to be, or of what lay before her in the future; but the point is she believed the report and obeyed God's call, and so made a distinct break with all her old connections and chose the path of blessing.

Probably many a time you have heard the report of God's love and grace through His faithful servants. How are you treating it? Has it had any real effect upon your life, or are you simply going on as usual and ignoring the call-the call of God to you? Time is so short and is fast running to its close, as everything around shows. Oh, simply obey, and blessing untold is before you!

No doubt Rebekah learned much during that never-to-be-forgotten journey. How readily would Eliezer reply to her queries, and how gladly would he tell her about his master Isaac! She must have listened with wonder to the story of Mount Moriah, every day learning more about the one who in perfect subjection to his father's will could unresistingly yield himself to death at his command. And she was to be linked with such an One in risen life. No wonder, when at the journey's end the servant pointed out his master, that she took a veil and covered herself. Her heart was won, and from henceforth she was for Isaac alone.

Has not this a voice to us? If we only realized more what depths of perfection there are in Christ and what He can be to us and what He wants us to be to Him, I am sure we would, like Rebekah, turn our back on the world and its attractions, and desire to be for Christ alone!

Work for the Lord

A very necessary protest has been raised against carnal activity in Christian work. A word of warning against the opposite extreme is also often needed, and never more so than at the present time. In too many cases a purely contemplative Christianity has been carried to extremes, resulting in dwarfed energies and spiritual uselessness.

Do we half realize the awful future which awaits the majority of those around us? Do we ever think that some of our acquaintances, with whom we smilingly exchange greetings, will ere long awake in HELL? that many we daily meet in business will shortly find their portion in the lake of fire? I ask, Do we realize this? And do these thoughts added to an intense desire for their salvation, nerve us to brave their vulgar ridicule or polite contempt, and speak with affectionate importunity of the ark of safety in the Christ of God?

This is not time for idleness. The time is short; eternity with silent tread draws daily nearer; the harvest is almost past, the summer is almost ended, and many, many souls are still unsaved.

"Go, labor on while it is day;

The world's dark night is hastening on.

Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away;

It is not thus that souls are won.

"Men die in darkness at thy side,

Without a hope to cheer the tomb;

Take up the torch and wave it wide,

The torch that lights time's thickest gloom."

The World's Last Chance

The position of this world is an awful one. It has rejected the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in all their manifestations of righteousness and love.

The Son and the Spirit have both visited this scene in Person. One is here and One is not here. The Son came to reveal the Father and to display divine love as it had never been displayed. In the life of that lowly, gracious Man was a perfect representation of the Father. His was no hidden life; it was lived before the gaze of men. In word and deed, such deep grace shone forth accompanied by unmatched power, and at the close of His ministry He says, "Now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." John 15:24. The world had rejected the Son, and with Him the Father also.

But the ways of divine love are very wonderful, for immediately after speaking thus He announces that the Holy Spirit shall come to earth that He may "testify of Me." This was the world's last opportunity. The Spirit was to come because the Son was rejected. If the Spirit should be rejected too, what is left for the world? Nothing but the pure, righteous wrath of an insulted God. Jesus, in announcing the advent of the Spirit, foreshadowed the setting in of a day of grace; but a day that would assuredly be followed by a night of judgment.

Despite the world's awful sin in rejecting the Father and the Son, grace still lingered over the world, loath to leave it to itself and to its doom; hence, when Jesus ascended to heaven, the Spirit came to earth (Acts 1, 2).

But both blessing and woe are connected with His coming. His testimony received brings salvation; rejected, it carries with it eternal judgment. The world has been given its last chance, but it is a wonderful chance, for while He, the Spirit, is here, there is salvation for the vilest. Today the destiny of numberless souls is being decided by the rejection or reception of the Spirit's witness.

"He shall testify of Me," says the Son; and this witness of the Spirit is found in the Bible, which is His work. Prophecy, symbol, type, and figure, interwoven throughout Old Testament history, is the Spirit's way of testifying of Jesus there; and in the New Testament the incarnation, life and ministry of the Son are brought before us and then the Spirit illuminates Calvary's dark scene. There we see Jesus as the true and only sacrifice for sin, the Savior of the world.

But while it is true that the Holy Spirit has in the Word given a powerful testimony to the work of Christ in its blessed efficacy for the salvation of the lost, it is also true that He has taken up an attitude toward this world which must never be forgotten. In John 16 Christ says, "When He is come, He will reprove (bring demonstration to) 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; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

In whatever way it may please men to view and speak of Christ's death, there, unchanged and awful, is the Spirit's witness that His crucifixion was the result of the world's unbelief in Him, and

the sin of that crucifixion is fixed upon it (Acts 2:22-24). The world got rid of one divine Person by crucifying Him, but it is a solemn and significant fact that another divine Person came straightway to bring demonstration to it of this dreadful crime. It may suit the world to try and forget or smooth over that shameful act at Calvary, when Incarnate Love was taken by guilty hands and for no offense whatever was put to death, but it will never be able to clear itself of the sin.

The world cannot get rid of the Holy Spirit as it got rid of Jesus. He is beyond its power and, whether men know it or not, the terrible fact remains that His presence here is a perpetual witness of the sin which is upon it in crucifying Him whose only crime was to make known the glories of divine love.

Where is Jesus now? The Spirit points us to the Father's throne and tells us He is there. The world displayed its utter sinfulness in crucifying the Son; the Father's righteousness was displayed in seating Him at His own right hand. And this act of the Father's righteousness sheds an eternal light upon the world's guilt. That blessed Person whom men spat upon and put into the most ignominious place on earth, has been exalted to the highest place in heaven. Thus has the Father declared the worthiness of the Son; and the Spirit's testimony as to the Son's present position reveals the magnitude of the world's sin in rejecting Him.

And this is not all. Satan, who led man on to commit this crime, who is the world's prince, who has control here over the hearts and minds of the unconverted, and who has them in his power and leads them in his chain, has been judged. His wickedness rose to its greatest height at Calvary; the witness of the Spirit as to Satan is that he is judged, and the moment fixed when he shall be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for him and his angels. (Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41)

And if the prince is judged, what of the people? Why, the judgment of God is hovering over them.

But though this is true, yet the position of Satan and that of the world differs; for while there is no hope for Satan, there is hope for sinners while the Holy Spirit is here. There is salvation for them on one condition, which is that they receive His testimony.

He is here to declare to mankind the sin that was committed in murdering Jesus of Nazareth, and the testimony which He bears to this renders every human being on earth responsible to clear themselves of all participation in the crime by accepting without delay Jesus as their Savior. They must avail themselves of the work which He accomplished on that cross where man's sin placed Him for the salvation of their souls, for apart from the Spirit's indictment of the world for the slaying of Christ, He points fallen humanity to the very same crucified Christ. He tells them that their only hope is in Him, that at the cross the whole question of human guilt was gone into and that a full and complete satisfaction for sin was made in the Son's death and blood shedding. He teaches that out of evil good has come, that God's love has triumphed over man's sin, and that the very act whereby humanity consummated their guilt has been used by God to provide a full and everlasting salvation for their souls. From the judgment of that Holy One, pardon flows forth to the guilty; from His smiting, healing comes to a sin-sick humanity; from His death, eternal life springs for every child of Adam that believes in Him (Acts 2:12-36; 13:38, 39).

It is the complete and glorious triumph of divine wisdom and love over man's sin and folly, and Satan's craft and malignity. At the cross Satan was defeated and his condemnation sealed. On the one hand was manifested, in a light that will never grow dim, man's hatred of God and all good;

and on the other, Jesus' perfect obedience, and God's magnificent love and holy abhorrence of sin.

Yet, though the Spirit can and does announce to man a present and eternal salvation through that wondrous work, He never ceases to warn the world of another work that Jesus has to accomplish. The Son has been appointed to judge (Acts 17:31; 2 Thess. 1:6-10).

Hidden from man's gaze for centuries, He will again be manifested, but this time not in grace, not in weakness, not to endure reproach, but to pour upon it in the power of omnipotent might, the wrath of the offended Deity.

Salvation or judgment, bliss or woe, heaven or hell, Jesus as Savior or Jesus as judge, this is the Spirit's never changing story, His never varying witness to a lost world.

And how has mankind treated the witness of the Spirit? It is now more than nineteen centuries since He came to earth. And what is the world's condition? Has it accepted His witness? Just as in the days of Christ the world rejected the Father and the Son, it has now rejected the Spirit, for in rejecting His testimony, they have rejected Him.

God's means for blessing this present world are thus exhausted. He can do nothing more. In rejecting the Spirit, men close the door of salvation against themselves. Angels are not sent as revealers of God's mercy, but the Son and the Spirit came; and in these the whole Trinity, in all its wondrous manifestations of compassion for and interest in the fallen creature, has been refused by mankind.

The world has sealed its own doom, and that doom is fixed. It has thrown away its last opportunity. No power now can arrest the threatened judgment. And time is hurrying it toward the awful crisis. The last moments of the dispensation are here. Christ is at hand. The Spirit and the saints will soon be gone; and the world, now careless of its danger, will wake up to reap the awful consequences of rejecting the Father's love, the Son's work, and the Spirit's strivings. "Depart from us" (Job 22:17), said the world of Noah's time to God, and He took them at their word. "Depart from us" was said in substance to the Son by men nineteen hundred years ago, and He left them. (Luke 8:37.) "Depart from us," this present world is saying to the Spirit, and soon He shall depart.

Reader, if you have not listened to the Spirit's solemn witness concerning Jesus, if you have not yielded to the authority of the Son, if you have not left the rebel ranks and placed yourself beneath the banner of Christ, if you have not received Him as the Savior of your lost soul, you are yet in fellowship with this unhappy world - part of it - and charged in the mind of God with the sin of rejecting the blessed Trinity in all its wondrous ways of grace.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net