

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 37

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 37, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

73 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 37

Things We Know in 1 John

CHAPTER 2 Verses

Fathers have known Him (Christ). 13, 14

Little children have known the Father 13

We know it is the last time. 18

Ye know all things. 20

Ye know the truth. 21

CHAPTER 3 Verses

We know we shall be like Him. 2

Ye know He was manifested to take away our sins. 5

We know we have passed from death unto life.. 14

We know we are of the truth. 19

We know He abideth in us. 24

CHAPTER 4 Verses

Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us. 13

We have known the love God hath to us. 16

CHAPTER 5 Verses

We know that we love the children of God. 2

Ye may know that ye have eternal life 13

We know that we have the petitions that we desired. 15

We know that whoseever is born of God sinneth not 18

We know we are of God 19

We know that the Son of God is come. 20

We know Him that is true 20

We know that we are in Him that is true 20

Always

C.H. Spurgeon was talking to a farmer who had a weathervane on his farm, on the arrow of which was inscribed, "God is love." He said to the farmer, "What do you mean by that? Do you think God's love is as changeable as the weather?"

"Oh, no! I mean that whichever way the wind blows, God still is love."

Bear Ye One Another's Burdens

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

The only question to be considered in this passage is as to the meaning of the law of Christ. It is generally said to be the law of love, and this is true, but it is more precise than that. The preceding verse enjoins the spiritual one to restore a fallen brother in the spirit of meekness, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The spiritual man, remembering his own liability to fall, is to go in all gentleness to him who has been "overtaken in a fault" or offense, and in grace to identify himself with his condition so as to take his burden of sin and sorrow upon himself, with a view to his succor and restoration.

Now this is exactly what Christ Himself has done perfectly both in life and in death. Thus the evangelist says, "He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. 8:16, 17. This was in His life, and concerning His death Peter says, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." 1 Pet. 2:24. He was thus both in life and in death the great burden-bearer; in life He took away the infirmities and sicknesses of men with compassion and grace; in death He bore our sins in substitution, as being made sin for us by God when He endured all that was due to us on account of our sins, that He might take them away forever. Both His life and His death were for the glory of God.

There is a great difference between His burden bearing in life and that in His death, but still He was in both the burden-bearer. And the law of Christ is, "Bear ye one another's burdens," and so fulfill the law of Him who is our Lord and example. Love was undoubtedly the motive of all, for, as the Apostle says, He "loved me, and gave Himself for me;" and it is certain that we shall never go and take the burden of our brethren on ourselves unless we are under the constraint of the love of Christ.

The Best

"Set your affection [or mind] on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:2.

A "set" mind, not a wandering mind or a confused mind, is required for the day in which we live. We need a mind set on heavenly things. "Things" constitute a major part of life, and can affect us for good or ill. However, the Lord Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Since the believer's Father, Savior, name, reward, inheritance, and best interests are in heaven, it should be quite natural to set his mind on heavenly things.

This will not make him impractical. Paul was as heavenly minded while making tents as when preaching or writing his epistles. He could write about food, raiment, shelter and books, as well as about the unsearchable riches of Christ. The inclination and purpose of the Christian's life should be heavenly.

A Better Country

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 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. 11:13-16.

Not only were those spoken of here "strangers and pilgrims" but they "confessed" it. People sometimes wish to be religious in private, and not to speak of it; this requires no energy of faith. To see the world as a lost and condemned place, to have our hopes in heaven—such facts must of necessity produce a proportionate result, that of making us think and act as "strangers and pilgrims" here. And it will be manifested in the whole life. If the heart be already elsewhere, it remains only for us to set out. This evidently involves open and public profession of the fact, and herein is a testimony for Christ.

Who would be satisfied with the friend that did not own us when circumstances were difficult? The concealed Christian is a very bad Christian. Faith fixed on Jesus, we embrace the things we have seen afar off; we are not mindful of the country from whence we have come out; we have at heart that "better country" before us. Where difficulties are in the path, and the affections not set on Jesus, the world rises again in the heart (Phil. 3:7-14). Paul had not acted in a moment of excitement to repent forthwith; his heart filled with Christ, he counts all but dross and dung. Perseverance of heart marks the Christian's affections to be onward, his desires heavenly. And God is not ashamed to be called his God.

It is either the flesh or faith; it is impossible that at bottom there can be a stopping halfway. The aim of the Christian must be heavenly things. The appetites and necessities of the new man are heavenly. Christians may be used for bettering the world, but this is not God's design. Seeking to link ourselves with the world and using Christianity for world-mending are earthly things. God's design is to link us with heaven. You must have heaven without the world, or the world without heaven. He who prepares the city cannot wish for us anything between the two. The "desire" of a "better country" is the desire of a nature entirely from above.

The Bridegroom Comes

The great truth of the Lord's coming in person the second time shines brightly through the Scriptures. For many, years, however, it was forgotten. But the Lord foresaw this and foretold it in the parable of the ten virgins. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." The wise as well as the foolish ceased to watch and wait. So as years passed, the coming of the Lord ceased to be an object of joyous hope and expectation, and the promise of His coming was either spiritualized and explained away, or it dropped out of sight altogether. In the early days of Christianity, it was far otherwise. The Lord's return, like a golden thread, was interwoven with all other truth, and the youngest convert was led to look at once for the Savior, as Paul points out in 1 Thess. 1:9, 10: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Many have always believed the Lord Jesus would come in judgment at the end of the world, but we are not speaking of His appearing in judgment. He will without doubt come to judge, for we are told that God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." Acts 17:31. And when He thus appears, it will be in flaming fire, and with the angels of His might, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). All that is solemnly true, but if we were to explain the parable in Matthew 25 as if it related to that event, we should mar its beauty and pervert its meaning, for it speaks of the coming of the Bridegroom, not of the Judge. The ungodly may hear with alarm of the Judge's approach, knowing in themselves that the hour of punishment is at hand, but the Bridegroom's coming is waited for with earnest desire by those who are assured of His faithful love. Accordingly, at the close of the Revelation, when the Lord Jesus calls Himself the bright and morning star, the Spirit and the bride say to Him, "Come." And the last word spoken by Him from the glory is, "Surely I come quickly." To this assurance, so cheering and sustaining, there is the ready response, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Who could ever imagine that such language would be used if we looked for Him as judge?

"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." From this we understand that a clear testimony was to go forth before the Bridegroom came. Surely the cry has been raised, and, whether men will heed it or not, the fact that the Lord is coming again has been sounded out far and wide. At any moment He may come: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. Then it will be said, The Bridegroom has come, and they that were ready have gone in with Him to the marriage.

If we believe that the midnight cry has gone forth, and that the Bridegroom is at the door, how needful it is that we should see that our lamps are well trimmed so that they may burn with a

brighter, purer, steadier flame than ever. "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Eph. 5:8. Again, in 1 Thess. 5:5-10 we read: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." We need to pay attention to the Spirit's word of exhortation calling us to watchfulness and sobriety of mind, to the exercise of faith and love and hope in view of our Lord's return.

"A little while-He'll come again;

Let us the precious hours redeem;

Our only grief to give Him pain;

Our joy to serve and follow Him.

Watching and ready may we be,

As those that wait their Lord to see."

Brought to God

Christianity brings us directly, immediately, to God. Each individual is directly and immediately in relationship to God-his conscience before God, his heart confidingly in His presence. Judaism had a priesthood; the people could not go into God's presence. They might receive blessings, offer offerings, celebrate God's goodness, have a law to command them, but the way into the holiest was closed by a veil, "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." Heb. 9:8. When the Lord Jesus died, the veil was rent from top to bottom, and we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Heb. 10:19, 20. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20), He "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." 1 Pet. 3:18. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. Hence the essence of Christianity, as applied to men, is that the Christian himself goes directly, personally into the holiest with boldness in Christ's name and through Christ. He has access by Christ through one Spirit to the Father.

Our being brought nigh by the blood of Jesus characterizes Christianity. The holiness of God's own presence is brought to bear on the soul. "If we walk," it is said, "in the light, as He is in the light"-yet not as in fear, which repels, for we know perfect love through the gift of Jesus. We have boldness to enter into the holiest-the presence of God Himself. We go forth to the world that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal bodies, which are the epistle of Christ. Each individual Christian may realize it to a different degree, but this is what Christianity practically is. He has made us kings and priests to God and His Father. This truly elevates.

Man is not elevated by intellectual pretensions, for he never gets, nor can get, beyond himself. What elevates him is heart intercourse (fellowship) with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. But even where the heart has not found its blessed home there through grace, the principle morally elevates, for it at least puts the natural conscience directly before God and refers the soul personally and immediately to Him in its estimate of good and evil. There may be self-will and failure, but the standard of responsibility is preserved for the soul.

Romanism has, wherever it exercises its influence, closed the veil again. The faithful are not reconciled to God, they cannot go into the holiest, they have a priesthood, and saints, and the virgin Mary between them and God. Christianity is a divine work which, through the redemption and life of a heavenly Mediator, has brought us to God; Romanism is a system of mediators on earth and in heaven, placed between us and God, to whom we are to go, and who go for us, we being too unworthy to go ourselves.

It sounds lowly, this voluntary humility, but it shuts out the conscience from the witness of God's presence, and casts aback on our own unworthiness. It puts away and denies the perfect love of God as known to us (shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit given to us) through Christ. It repudiates the blessed, tender grace of Jesus, that High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We must go to the heart of Jesus through the heart of Mary, we are told

by Roman Catholicism. Surely, blessed and honored though she was, I would rather trust His heart.

Caleb

In the sorrowful history of Israel in the wilderness it is truly refreshing to find a man like Caleb. He is not one of the great public figures, as Moses, Aaron, or Joshua. He was one of the heads of the children of Israel, of the honored tribe of Judah, going the weary round of the wilderness with his brethren, but assuredly with lighter heart and firmer step than they. In this respect, he very blessedly illustrated what "the earnest of the Spirit" is; at the same time he is a type of that class of "unknown, yet well known" Christians who, apart from murmuring and strife, are steadily traveling toward that rest of which the Lord Himself has spoken to them.

Historically, Caleb presents to us a feature which we do not find even in Moses himself. He had known Egypt for the first forty years of his life; he had walked through Canaan for forty days; he had gone through the wilderness, had passed over Jordan into the possession of Canaan, and was still full of manly vigor and courage. He was one of those who, through faith, had obtained promises and was not satisfied until he was in actual possession.

"On the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt," Moses and Aaron numbered Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, "every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel." Numbers 1:1-3. Again, after the plague in which twenty-four thousand perished in the matter of Baal-peor, Moses and Eleazar the priest numbered Israel in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho. "But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of, Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." Numbers 26:64, 65.

What kept Caleb and Joshua from being worn out by the trial of the wilderness which had worn out all their generation? "Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be that the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." Josh. 14:6-12.

"I brought him word again as it was in mine heart." Caleb owned that it was a pleasant land which the Lord gave to the children of Israel, and his heart was set upon it. He could discern the difference between that land and Egypt-between the land which was cultivated with all human skill, "watered with the foot," and "a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deut. 11:11, 12. His treasure was in the land, and there was his heart. Others esteemed Egypt preferable to the wilderness when their hearts were discouraged from going up to possess Canaan on account of the difficulties in the way, but Caleb esteemed Canaan, with all the difficulty of entering into it, as far more precious than Egypt which had present ease, but also present bondage.

Canaan was in his heart all the time he traversed the wilderness. He had tasted the fruit of Canaan; his eyes had beheld it, and he did not need to go on the report of others as to the land-his own feet had trodden it, and this made his steps light as he traveled through the wilderness. Besides this, he had the sure word of the Lord's promise to support him. He knew the certain end unto which his wanderings, in company with others, must lead. As they encamped or traveled at the commandment of the Lord, he could either rest in his tent, or march through the wilderness, saying after every weary march or lengthened encampment, The wilderness time is passing; the day of again seeing the land is near. As his contemporaries wasted away, how solemn must have been the admonition to his soul against the sin of unbelief. How forcibly the rapid passing away of that evil generation must have reminded him of the word of the Lord: "Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it: but My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereunto he went; and his seed shall possess it." Numb. 14:22-24.

The Apostle Peter reminds us: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." 1 Pet. 1:8, 9. If the Spirit of God shows to us the things which are freely given to us of God, He shows them not as in the distant future, but, being Himself the earnest of the inheritance, He glorifies Jesus now, taking of His things and showing them to us. He shows them as possessed by us now, so that we can taste and handle our own blessings. We are also solemnly warned as to the evil of unbelief in finding many things which we have fondly clung to passing away so that we would be bitterly disappointed were it not that, by the Spirit, we more fully realize the unfailing blessings which are ours in Christ.

"Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God." It is no presumption in any of us to answer to the testimony of God in our own souls. So did Caleb, for the Lord said, "But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully." Caleb had searched the land, following the Lord his God there, when the Lord Himself was his guide and defense, and no enemy could set upon him. He had seen that the land "was exceeding good," and he reckoned on the good pleasure of the Lord in His people. "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us." The soul of Caleb rested entirely on the grace and power of God which had caused Israel to triumph at the Red Sea, and had kept the spies in searching the land. The same grace and power alone

could lead them into possession of the land, and he trusted in this.

When his soul recognized where the Lord was, he could see victory. But the very same principle of fully following the Lord, which made him encourage the people to go up, would hinder him from the attempt after the Lord had said, "Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea," for the Lord had no delight in the people. Where the Lord was, there was both grace and power, and Caleb had to learn that grace and power on which he had already trusted, for forty years in the wilderness, before they eventually put him in actual possession of the very part of the land upon which he had trodden many years before. He fully followed the Lord through the wilderness. He knew Him there as his guardian and guide whom he had known as a mighty deliverer out of Egypt, and who had introduced him into Canaan, and enabled him to see and search the land and know its fruit.

The Spirit of God is presented to us in direct contrast with the spirit of the world. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." 1 Cor. 2:12, 13. The spirit of the world is one of restless activity and inquiry, either to find out something new or to invent some remedy against the misery of man. It may take either a speculative or a practical turn, but it never discovers the satisfactory remedy. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" Hab. 2:13. The spirit of the world is always advancing, but never reaching its end-leading always to that which is coming, but never yet has come. The Spirit of God is the very opposite.

If Caleb needed to have his heart occupied with Canaan to cheer his spirit in the wilderness, we need not only the earnest of the Spirit for the same purpose, but we need Him also to keep us from the seductive power of the spirit of the world. This He does by showing to us the things freely given to us of God as so high and blessed that they have not even been conceived by the daring boldness of man's heart. As the earnest, He leads the soul to long to see Christ as He is, and to be like Him, and thus, too, leads in the path of fully following the Lord.

To be forever with the Lord is the blessing we look forward to, but to have Him always with us now is what preserves us. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." John 14:18. How this is made good by the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, the "other Comforter!" Oh, that with purpose of heart we might cleave unto the Lord, and say in the midst of sorrowful experience, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Psalm 16:6.

The Holy Spirit, as the earnest, is the Spirit of "promise," not only as being Himself the "promise of the Father," but substantiating promises to the soul. As Caleb saw his contemporaries die off day by day, how much he needed the encouragement of the specific promise of the Lord-"The Lord hath kept me alive, as He said." The Holy Ghost is the quickener; He is the earnest, and He is also the Holy Spirit of promise, thus giving special value to the Word, bringing it to remembrance and applying a familiar text with unknown power, because such a promise or such a scripture exactly suits the circumstances of our need.

Subjection of mind to the authority of Scripture distinguishes the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the spirit of the world and distinguishes real spirituality from cloudy mysticism. The Scripture becomes of increasing value in proportion as the spirit of the age advances. As applied by the Spirit of truth, it gives the consciousness of certainty when the spirit of the world is leading into general skepticism. The result of these two conflicting spirits-the spirit of the world and the Spirit which is of God-is, that the one will lead to set the stability of created things against the promise of Christ's coming, the other, to throw the soul more entirely on His promise (2 Peter 3). But the soul now needs establishment and encouragement, and the Holy Spirit, as the earnest, gives such a reality to the promises of God in Scripture, that the soul is enabled to set the Word of God against all appearances of things or opinions of men.

"As my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." All the weary round of forty years of toil in the wilderness had not impaired the strength of Caleb. He had sung "The Lord is my strength." He had acted on that strength when he searched the land, and now, at the age of eighty-five, he finds his strength the same. The Lord was his strength. Now the power is actually manifested in strengthening the saints with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. The characteristic form of power now is endurance. It is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for glory, honor and immortality. The spirit of the world is that of impatience with delay, and desire of grasping some supposed present blessing, but the Spirit which is of God, being Himself the earnest of a certain inheritance, becomes especially the Spirit of power in enabling us patiently to wait for what is ours already. It is thus that although the outer man may decay, the inner is renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

The Holy Spirit keeps the eye looking on invisible realities, making them, as it were, more tangible day by day. Each day brought Caleb nearer to Canaan which was in his heart. It is blessed indeed to see an aged disciple in whom the cravings of the mind for novelty have passed away, who has gone through, it may be, the ordeal of worldly fascination, who has found his progress very rough indeed. Disappointment succeeding disappointment, yet all tending to one thing-to make him know the value of one blessed Object, even Jesus.

"If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, even as the Lord said," says Caleb. There is no doubt or uncertainty in this "if so be." It was only reckoning on the Lord's faithfulness to His promise, and on His ability to perform it, at the same time implying that this was his only ground of confidence. But with confirmed confidence he could reckon on the Lord's being with him, whose Presence had been with him when he searched the land, and whose Presence had been with him while traveling through the wilderness.

Is it not so with the believer now? Quickened by the Spirit when dead in trespasses and sins, he has known the same Spirit revealing Jesus to his soul as the salvation of God. He knows the same Spirit as the abiding Comforter, glorifying Jesus, taking of His things and showing them unto the soul. He knows, by the presence of the same Comforter, that God has called him unto His own kingdom and glory, and that same Spirit now shows to the soul what is the hope of God's calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

The Child of Resurrection

A lovely example of the workmanship of the Spirit is presented to us in the Shunammite woman, whose faith with its fruits, trials, and triumphs, is the subject before us. One fruit of faith much commended in Scripture is that enjoined upon us in such passages as the following: "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." 1 Pet. 4:9. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Heb. 13:2. "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in." Matt. 25:35. What a beautiful instance of such hospitality is presented to us here. "And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that, as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread." The lowly husbandman of Abel-Meholah, a welcome guest with the "great woman" of Shunem, is a lovely illustration of what grace can do. Nor did she know, as it would appear, anything of him when she first "constrained him to eat bread," save the homely garb, the unpretentious exterior of the man.

Another fruit of faith much noted in Scripture is the capacity of discerning and owning "like precious faith" in others. Who could give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple if he had not the capacity of discerning the badge of discipleship? Beautiful is the display of this spiritual discernment of where God had set His mark and put His honor in the case of this godly Shunammite. She had shown him hospitality as a stranger, and afterward "as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread," but in these repeated interviews she saw enough of him to make her long from a deeper motive to provide a more permanent accommodation for him. "She said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." The Lord grant us, beloved, to be so in communion with Himself that wherever His name is truly confessed, and His Spirit dwells, we may be quick to discern and joyful to own His handiwork.

The Shunammite's appreciation of the tastes and habits of her guest is another lovely trait which the Spirit has been pleased to note in her ways. It was Martha's failure (Luke 10) that while she truly and devotedly loved the Lord, she little appreciated His glory and the errand on which He had come from heaven to earth; she thought to please Him by providing for Him a sumptuous feast. To think of entertaining God manifest in the flesh with a feast! Not so Mary. She knew that He had come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. She spread the table and provided the feast that He had really come for the purpose of enjoying, by sitting at His feet and opening her heart to drink in the words of eternal life from His lips. This godly Shunammite shared the same characteristic. She had Martha's hospitality with Mary's appreciation of her guest, and her guest was but mortal, a servant of God indeed, but still a mortal man. Martha and Mary's guest was the Lord from heaven. Elisha enjoyed a hearty welcome at the home of the Shunammite; there was even an apartment set aside for his use, where he might turn in and tarry as long as he would. But what a tale does its furniture tell! There was no provision for the lust of

the eye, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. A bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick are what it contained. A pilgrim's accommodation showed how entirely the Shunammite had appreciated the pilgrim character of her guest. Would that there were more of this heavenly simplicity among us, beloved. Would that our hearts were so in heaven that we might feel, as to one another, that even our hospitality must be after a godly sort-cordial, large-hearted, without grudging, as the Apostle says-but yet not as though we looked upon each other as in the flesh, or thought we could gratify one another by making provision for its lusts.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have," is the exhortation of the Apostle. How the spirit of it was exemplified by the Shunammite! Elisha instructed Gehazi to say to her, "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" God had wrought a great deliverance by Elisha for the king and his allies but a short time before, and thus, for the season, he could doubtless have had of the king whatever he asked. But the Shunammite wished for nothing that the king or the captain of the host could give. "I dwell among mine own people," was the reply of her contented spirit. Can we in any way so powerfully testify to the world of its vanity and the emptiness of all it offers? If anything can tell on the conscience of a worldling, it is to see a child of God so conscious of his portion in his Father's love that he declines when it is in his power to accept a portion here.

But if Elisha, like an apostle of later days, was destitute of silver and gold, and if the Shunammite did not care for what his temporary favor with the king might have procured her, it was because he and she had interest in other things, and she did not refuse what the prophet promised on behalf of "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." She was childless and her husband was old, but the prophet assured her that at the set time she should embrace a son. The promise thus given, God fulfilled it, and a child, direct from his hand, crowned the faith which had already produced such lovely fruits. How the Shunammite must have loved her son. With what inexpressible tenderness she must have nursed him in infancy, and watched the unfoldings of his faculties as from infancy he passed to boyhood, and from that to youth. But she had to learn the lesson that God is the God of resurrection, and it will be well for us if God's record of His dealings with her should be used of Him to help us learn that lesson too.

"And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." What a stroke was this! The child whose birth had crowned her faith and whom she had received, as it were, direct from God's hand, had died. Was this God's reward for the care which He had put into her heart to have for His servant, the prophet? Was it for this that God made Himself known as the quickener of the dead, causing the barren to bear, only that when the child was born he might be suddenly torn away? No, she had better thoughts of God than this. It was not that she questioned His right to take what His mercy had bestowed. But her faith gathered from the past what God's meaning and purpose was in dealing with her as He had done, and she was not without hope. But her son was dead. What then? It was from God, who quickens the dead, that she had received her son. What could she do? That was not the question. What rather, could God do? That was faith's question, and thus there was no case too extreme for faith because there is none too extreme for God. Faith knows and trusts. "With God all things are

possible."

Circumstances which produce utter despondency where there is not faith, are to faith only the occasion for more singly and entirely trusting God. "And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again." The husband remonstrated. It was neither the new moon nor the Sabbath day, and his faith went not beyond the ordinary exercises of devotion, if indeed he were a man of faith at all. Faith like his wife's, who did not give up her son though dead, because she knew Him who quickens the dead, he seemed to have no thought of. But his wife could neither be detained nor turned aside. "It shall be well," is all the reply she made, and hastened to the man of God at Carmel.

But here she was to meet with other trials of her faith. If there was anyone or anything in danger of being between her soul and God, it was the prophet, the man of God. To own him as the prophet of God was indeed at that time the test of faith in Israel. God had honored him in fulfilling his promise, on God's behalf, that the woman should have a son. But it was possible then, as it is now, for the channel through which blessing flows to come between the soul and the Source from whence it was supplied. At all events, the Shunammite was to learn that even the man of God could of himself do nothing for her. To all the inquiries of Gehazi she had only one answer-"Well." She was not to be detained by him. "And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." One word from her revealed the whole, and the prophet at once dispatched Gehazi with his master's staff to lay upon the face of the child. Whether the prophet did this under divine guidance for a lesson to Gehazi, as well as to try the Shunammite's faith, or whether, as the matter had been hidden from him by the Lord, he acted in his own wisdom and strength without any direct guidance from God, I would not say. It is suggested as an inquiry for prayerful consideration. In either case the result is plain. The Shunammite could no more be put off with Gehazi and His master's staff than she could be detained by her husband's expostulations or Gehazi's inquiries. "And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her."

They met Gehazi returning from his fruitless journey-one of many examples that the forms and circumstances which are seen when faith is in action are all nothing apart from faith itself and the power of the living God on which faith rests. Elisha's staff in

Gehazi's hands was as powerless as any other piece of wood. The prophet's staff without the prophet's faith accomplished nothing. "There was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked." The Lord grant us to be exercised by the serious lesson which these words convey.

What a scene follows! Already there had been enough to make even Elisha feel that it was no ordinary case, and that through it God was dealing with him as well as with the Shunammite. Perhaps the fact that Gehazi's journey with the staff (undertaken at the prophet's request) proved entirely futile was enough to awaken the inquiry in the soul of the prophet whether God was not teaching him, as well, that the power was not in him, but in God Himself. But even if Elisha had to

learn this lesson more deeply than he had as yet learned, it was not that his faith in God might be shaken or weakened, but tried and strengthened. Tried it was, but not shaken.

"When Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed." The mother's faith had placed the dead body there. "He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord." The prophet, a dead corpse, and the living God, the quickener of the dead! "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child." So completely did he identify himself with the one for whom he interceded that it was as though he would tell God that if the child were not restored to life he could only lie there with him in death. What faith! What holy boldness!

He is given encouragement. "The flesh of the child waxed warm." There were some signs of returning vitality to strengthen the prophet's faith and encourage him to persevere. "Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him." What is all this the witness of but of that agony of prayer, that energy of faith, of which we know so little? But "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Jas. 5:16. "The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes." Prayer was heard; faith was crowned. God showed Himself once more to be in very truth the God of resurrection. And when the mother came in to the prophet into the chamber, he said, "Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet [her heart too full to utter a single word], and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out."

The Lord grant us, like this Shunammite, to know nothing, to regard nothing but Himself. How privileged we are to know Him, the Resurrection and the Life, unknown to saints in any former dispensation, in the intimacy of communion. May we acknowledge it and confess if the sin of unbelief has robbed us of our joy, but may neither this nor anything else be allowed to hide from the view of faith "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

A Child of the Bridechamber

Matt. 9:9-17

The conversion of Matthew the publican will not, I believe, be fully enjoyed if we do not continue with it in our view to the end of verse 17, for I regard Matthew as being at that moment in the thoughts of the Lord - a new bottle with the new wine in it.

The Lord met him in the position he had occupied in the world as a publican; he was sitting at the receipt of custom. Jesus passed by, and Matthew was made willing. He hearkened diligently to Christ, and his soul at once found delight, for he arose and followed the Lord and then spread a great feast for Him (Luke 5:29).

This was joy and liberty, and Jesus sanctioned it. He sat at Matthew's table. This was done suddenly, it is true. But though sudden, it was not premature.

Though unbidden, it did not remain unsanctioned. The eunuch in his day went on his way rejoicing, and that rejoicing, like that of Matthew, was early and sudden, but it was not premature.

In Matthew there was light and the mind of Christ, as well as liberty and the joy of Christ. Matthew seated at the same table the publicans and sinners who had been following Jesus (Mark 2:15) - the very people for whom the Lord of glory came down from heaven, and the very people whom the Lord Himself will have at His own table in the day of the marriage supper - a company of sinners redeemed and washed in the blood of the Lamb. Matthew thus justly and beautifully understood the mind of Christ. He knew Him, though he had just then been introduced to Him. He was like the dying thief, for a short moment was time enough to carry the light and liberty of Christ into the dark and distant heart of both men.

Matthew was in Christ's presence in joy. He was a child of the bridechamber. He feasted the Lord. The King was sitting at his table, because, in spirit, Jesus had already brought Matthew to His banqueting house. This was the time of the kindness of his youth, or the love of his espousals, and in that joy he had risen up, left all, and followed Christ. The world might therefore be to him a "wilderness," a land "not sown" (Jer. 2:2), but with Jesus he feasted. He had listened to the word of power, the invitation of grace, and to his soul it had been a feast of fat things, wine and milk of the King's providing. It was as a bridegroom, as a lover of his soul, that Matthew had apprehended Christ and was now entertaining Him at his table; because of this newly found liberty and joy, Matthew is among the children of the bridechamber - a new bottle with the new wine in it.

Neither Moses nor John the Baptist could have made such a bottle as this. The word of Christ, heard in the light and energy of the Holy Ghost, could alone have provided it. On Him only, all the vessels of the Lord's house hang - the "flagons" and the "cups." The Pharisees and the disciples of John do not even understand this. The one object to the feast, with sinners - the other, that the feast is not a fast. The legalist and the religionist, neither of them can stand the publican's (that is, the sinner's) feast. The elder brother complains of the fatted calf. The music and the dancing, as

these joyful sounds reach him in his outside place, vex him, as the sight of the table and the company in the house of our Levi irritates the Pharisees as they look on and will not sit.

The Lord vindicates both the feast and the guests. He lets it be known, there and at that moment, that He has come to gather such a company. And He thereby vindicates the host as having done the part of a child of the bridechamber, and as having done it well.

This is a simple, sweet story of grace. Jesus finds a publican, a sinner, at his position in this wretched self-seeking world; He takes him up at once, makes him a new bottle, and fills him with new wine, like the Samaritan at Jacob's well. She was taken up just as she was, and where she was, and, as another child of the bridechamber, she was sent on her way rejoicing.

The world will fret itself and be driven to darkness, as the prophet speaks. The hearts of the Pharisees are rent by vexation at such a sight. The publican's feast is lost upon them, and the new wine is spilled, as the Lord adds: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish."

Days of absence, and therefore days of sorrow of heart, were to come after these feast days of His presence, but they had not come then. That day in Matthew's house was "one of the days of the Son of man." But the heart that can feast on a present Jesus will mourn an absent Lord. "The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." The children of the bridechamber will fast during the Bridegroom's absence, because He is dear to them. It is not the Pharisee's fast of religious service and merit, but the fast of a heart that has been weaned away from other objects, and for the present has lost the presence it values.

It is not from experience, but from desire only, one's heart traces the path of a child of the bridechamber. Of such a soul some of us will say, "I see from far the beautiful light." There are occasions and seasons when the state of the affections to Christ are sorrowfully discovered; we need a more earnest eye for Him. Our look at Him needs to be a nearer one, more fixed and personal. Our sight of Him is too commonly conducted as by the light of others. We are prone to have Him in company, in the reflections and by the help of the scenes and circumstances in which we place ourselves. I covet a more earnest look at Him, a look that can reach Him very closely and personally, without aid, or countenance, or company. The single eye knows Him only; the earnest eye enjoys Him deeply.

Mary at the sepulcher had this single eye when she could overlook the shining ones in search for her Lord. The sinner of the city had it when she could let the scorn

of the Pharisees pass over her without unsettling her. The Samaritan woman had it when she could forget her water pot, and the eunuch, when he went on heedless of the loss of Philip. Matthew had it. And it is this which not only realizes Christ, but puts Him in His due place both of attraction and supreme authority.

Christ the Truth

John 14:6

"Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?" John 18:38

Christ, and Christ only, is the Way. But there is another thing. Christ is not only the Way to the Father, but He is also the Truth. Where is truth to be found? In Him alone. He Himself is the Truth. Thus the man who has taken the Way possesses the Truth. He who has bowed to Christ does not want some new resource. Truly God is wise, and as good as He is wise.

Man in his natural state may ask, "What is truth?" but eludes the answer (John 18:38). How is this? It is because he is far from God, serves Satan in whom there is no truth, and wants less of Christ the more he knows about Him. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, people seemed to value Him at first, for they did not then know that He was the Truth, and were not yet proved by Him.

They were all looking for and expecting the promised Messiah. The time spoken of by Daniel was fulfilled, and men were in a state of expectation. The famous prophecy of the Weeks (Dan. 9:24-27) pointed to those days, and the Jews all knew, or might have known, that the time was quite near when the Messiah, the Prince, was to appear, though none understood that He was to be cut off. The very heathen were moved by the rumors of a coming Deliverer; they heard that the time was at hand that a mighty King should reign, and most remarkable changes happen for the world. Wise men came from the east to see Him that was born King of the Jews. More than one hundred and fifty years before Christ, the Old Testament had been translated into the Greek tongue, which was at that time the usual means of communication. This translation of the Bible was a sort of preparatory testimony. Thus the Jews were not the only people who were looking for the Messiah.

But He is much more. He is the Word. He is God. He is the light which, coming into the world, enlightens (or shines for) every man. And men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Hence the early attraction soon faded and gave way to fear and hatred, and as they desired not to know God or themselves, they sought to get rid of what convicted them by killing Him. However, they had not the power to destroy the eternal Son of God, and as we have seen Him as the Way, so He is the Truth. What is meant by it?

Let us compare Him with the law. The law is holy, just, and good, but still, it is nowhere called the truth. The law is the standard of divine requirement from man; it declares what God demands from him who takes the ground of his own obedience as his standard before Him. The truth is the revelation of God, the manifestation of everything else, in Christ. It is therefore not requirement, but revelation. In fact, God Himself contrasts them, as it is written, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Was it not God's law? Yes, but it was given by Moses who was the channel of communication. But Christ was and is the Way, and this not only for God to come down to man, but for man to go to God, even to the Father. Besides, He is the Truth. He makes everyone and everything known as it really is, and when we weigh what the truth is, we can

see that only Christ could be the full presentation of it. God is thus revealed, and Christ, being the revealer of God, is Himself said to be the Truth. As Son, He brings out what the Father is. But He, the Holy One of God, shows me what sin is-what I am. In short, He manifests everyone and everything exactly as each is.

God is never said to be the Truth, but Christ, being the image of the invisible God, is. Man is not capable of fathoming God; no man has seen God at any time. Who is competent to know God? No man, nor even angel. The creature does not know God, but God can make Himself known to the creature. How? In Christ by the Holy Spirit. This is the reason why the Holy Spirit is also called the Truth in 1 John 5. Christ, the Truth, is the object presented in whom I can learn everything as it is; the Spirit of God is the inward power that makes the truth enter into my soul, that I may have and enjoy it. Hence the necessity for the Holy Ghost, as well as Christ, to be the Truth. The spirit of man in itself is no more capable of knowing God than a beast is of understanding the mind of man. The beast has its own creature instincts, but no beast, no creature of that order, can exceed its own limitations. No lower creature is capable of understanding man, and no man, as such, can rise to what is above his nature.

Yet, without the truth, how wretched one must always be! I have sinned. How do I stand in relation to God? Are we doomed to be in utter uncertainty of the only thing that is of supreme importance? There are things that a man can come to, if left to himself-dread and horror, hardness and indifference. But these fears are only the premonition of what, far more terrible and unending, will befall him if he lives and dies as he is. What is to become of his soul? My answer is: Christ is the Truth; and Christ was here expressly on an errand of love, to glorify God, to save sinners by faith, to meet this dark and awful void and give life and peace, with certainty, to the believer.

Do not take the ground of an unbeliever and say that it is impossible to have certainty in this life. If God tells me anything and I believe, is it certain or not? If God tells me His mind, does this give no certainty? Christ is God's revelation of Himself to me. Do you say, I am a sinner: It is true as far as it goes, but even so, you do not know what a sinner you are, or you would not take it so quietly. You go to God about your sins then; will He leave you in a state of uncertainty? No; Christ has come, the sent One of God, to do His Father's will in the offering of His body, and by Him came grace and truth-not merely truth. And what grace it was! The Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, becoming a man, and not only so, but born of a woman! Adam was not born, but made. He was not a son of man therefore, though son of God in a certain sense (Luke 3:38). He came into the world already mature and formed to be its head; he had attained his full proportion when he came from God's hand. Jesus, on the other hand, was not merely a man, but the Seed of the woman, as no one ever was except He. He became a servant-all that man is-sin excluded. It is not only that He did not sin, but He was not capable of sinning; He could always say that His meat was to do God's will. "Lo, I come to do Thy will." But He was made sin on the cross; He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Do I learn how solemn sin is by prayer, or by looking into my own heart? No, but I see it in His cross. What did my sin cost Him? It brought upon Him, the Holy One, the horror of divine judgment, and now He is become the captain of salvation, having obtained eternal redemption. The same Jesus who reveals to me the truth of what a sinner I am, also gives me the truth of what a Savior I find in Him. Where shall I find what a holy man is? Can it be in Adam? The man who

could not keep his hands off the fruit of the tree that God had told him not to eat of-can he be a holy man? Why did he not listen to God? He disobeyed and became a sinner. Not that he was made so, for God made him innocent, and innocence supposes absence of evil, with liability to fall into it. But when Jesus was made flesh, He was not only sinless, but holy-holy not in ways only, but in nature. "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." There also we read, "A body hast Thou prepared Me," and this is never said of anyone else. Why was this body so specially prepared? Because there could not be anything that defiles in the Holy One. The smallest taint of evil would spoil the sacrifice; the lamb for the burnt offering was to be without blemish and without spot. When Jesus was born, although He was the Seed of the woman, there was no taint of sin in His nature; He is called that Holy thing, for He was born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus He could take upon Him not merely all our sins, but sin itself. This is the truth.

If I want to see what sin is, I can see it by contrast with the Lord Jesus. He came and showed out all its darkness. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." Christ is the Truth, so all is brought out before Him in its own character.

But there is just the same result with God; Christ as the Truth clearly shows what God is. It is never said that Christ is the likeness of God, though with the greatest emphasis, He is said to be His image. It would not be true to say of any man that he is like a man, although you may say so of an angel. Just in the same way, Jesus is not said to be like God, because He is God. Here was One who was perfectly able to show what God is. It is the Absolute deigning to become relative to man. As long as God is only God, He is unapproachable by man; man cannot understand Him. But I must know God, or I cannot have eternal life, and this cannot be apart from Him whom He has sent, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and He has brought me exactly what I need. God is the One who loves me, who comes down in the Person of Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, to meet the need of a poor sinner-if, again, I want to know what the devil is, it is the same Jesus that reveals it by contrast. Satan, a murderer from the beginning, and a liar, is the one being who always stands opposed to the Lord Jesus. Jesus therefore brought out what the devil was as it never had been manifested before, but the Son of God came that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Now, have you got the Truth? You have heard the truth in Him; what is the effect on your soul? "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." The law makes me feel my shortcomings, but the truth makes them even better known. But if I am willing to know how bad I am, I want to be delivered. Will the law do this? When the law was given, it put man at a distance. Moses was to set bounds to the mountain, and if a beast so much as touched it, it was to be slain. This, no doubt, was a wholesome, righteous warning, but the truth is, that the Lord Jesus came down from heaven to seek and to save the lost. And how are you to be saved? By submitting to the Truth-by coming as a sinner to the Savior of sinners. I cannot be saved except by the Truth. It is the Lord Jesus Himself who brings it all out to the soul, and, in confessing Him Lord, I believe God and set to my soul that He is true. By the grace of God, my soul bows to the truth, and I can say in my heart, This is just the truth for me. I abjure my unbelief; I bow to what God says of His Son. It is God's proclaiming what is true, and I believe He is as good as He says. I believe that He is forgiving my sins and making me His child on the spot. I deserve nothing, but Christ is my plea. I am willing to be nothing, that Christ and His cross may be everything for and to me.

But we must remember that the Holy Spirit is the Truth just as truly as Christ is. May He bring the truth home to your souls. Were you to live ever so long, and learn ever so much, it is only knowing better the Truth you received at the start. Confess Jesus as Lord, the only Savior, the Son of God. Confess all that grace has given you to know, and look well to it that your ways be a living confession of that Blessed One who is the Truth.

Christian Growth and Covering Love

A student, anxious to conclude his studies and receive his degree, asked his counselor if there weren't a more abbreviated course than the one prescribed. "Oh, yes," he was told, "but it depends upon what you want to be. When God wants to make one of those magnificent oak trees, He takes a hundred years, but when He wants to make a squash, He only takes six months."

We can relate this to the Christian life. The taste of the grace of God is one thing, but for it to be seen in our character, our attitudes, and our habits is quite another. Fruit ripens slowly. Days of sunshine, wind and rain each have their part before the fruit ripens to maturity.

It is well to note too that growth in a tree-or in the Christian-is not uniform. In two or three months there may be more growth than in the entire rest of the year. The period of rapid growth when the woody fiber is actually deposited between the bark and the trunk takes place during the months of May, June and July. During the rest of the year there is solidification, without which the green timber would be useless.

What all this means is that there are no shortcuts to maturity. Through experiences and spiritual exercises God enlarges our spiritual perception little by little, that we might possess and enjoy our inheritance. "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land." Exod. 23:29, 30.

It ought to be of tremendous encouragement to us to know "that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:16. And, beloved, it will take that long! Since God is working for eternity, do we need to be concerned about the time involved? Understanding this ought to give us at least two things: stability of soul and patience with one another-and the latter is of much importance!

Through our Lord's ways with us individually, we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ to maturity. But there is also a sense in which each believer is responsible for the growth of the Body of Christ. He has placed each member in the Body as it has pleased Him (1 Cor. 12:18), and this Body grows by each member acting in love (Eph. 4:16)-the power coming from that love shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

All who have put their trust in the Savior have the same life, salvation, faith, love, standing and relationship to God. There are no insignificant members in the Body of Christ; each is the "apple of His eye." (Faithfulness and rewards is another subject that we cannot go into now.)

It is true that one may be weak in faith while another is strong, but whoever confesses Jesus Christ as Savior belongs to His divine family, which makes up His Body on earth. We may not all have the same light, or have the same exercises, but that does not mean we cannot go on together in love. God has given us the responsibility of loving His own and of obeying His Word (1 John 5:2). When this is done, we experience fellowship and the divine life; the Body grows, and we

magnify Christ together. As the people of God go on together in this way. will they not know something of "... the days of heaven upon the earth"? Deut. 11:21.

It is necessary for us to walk in self-judgment before our Lord, but we must earnestly watch against slipping into the spirit of judging our brethren, for it will bring bitterness into the soul and make us unfit to go on rightly with one another.

We are members one of another, and are set in the Body to edify and encourage each other. We do not love Christ any more than we love His members.

In John 13 we see our Savior girding Himself and stooping down to wash the feet of His disciples. This is our example, beloved: ministering Christ to one another. This spirit of love and gentleness may take the form of a rebuke or warning, but it will always be intended for blessing, sensing our own weakness (Gal. 6:1). And, most importantly, we have the blessed privilege of intercessory prayer for those dear to the heart of God.

We live in difficult times, and we are assured from Scripture that they will become more so. It is not the time to be critical, faultfinding, or exposing the failures of His dear saints. We need one another-to encourage one another, and so much the more as the time of His return approaches. May that love which will occupy us for eternity even now be witnessed in our attitude toward one another. "Love covereth...." Pro. 10:12.

A Note About Christian Truth

Perhaps all who are now reading this little magazine will be interested to know something of its history. Doubtless some have been reading the Christian Truth for a number of years and have perhaps known something about it and possibly even known some of those who have been responsible in publishing it and their desire to put forth truth in written form.

In God's dealings with His people, Israel, we have things which were "written aforetime... for our learning." Rom. 15:4. And also in 1 Cor. 10:11 it says, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Considering then, how that God carried on His work at that time, surely we can profit in seeking to follow the ensamples or types set forth for us. First of all we see how that Moses was raised up and then trained of God in His school and then used to bring Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness. Next we see Joshua prepared and suited to carry on another phase of God's work with His people to bring them into the land of promise. Many battles were fought and inheritances were meted out to the different tribes but still there remained much land to possess. Thirdly the judges follow on in their respective part in the work of the Lord with His people.

In the last part of the previous century and in the early part of the 1900s, J.T. Armet was used much of God to sell, distribute, and publish Bibles and sound ministry. For many years he edited and printed a monthly magazine called The Young Christian. Some time after the Lord called His servant home, this monthly was changed and a new name given to it by those who took the responsibility of sending it forth. One of those who helped much with the newly named Christian Truth for the Household of Faith was Paul Wilson who wrote for it an editorial that many enjoyed reading.

In writing this note, we desire to "Remember them which have the rule [are the guides] over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Heb. 13:7.

After the Lord took Paul Wilson to be with Himself, another servant of the Lord assumed the main responsibility for this little magazine. This was Ralph G. Rule, who himself has now entered (January 1984) into the presence of the Lord and Savior he loved so much.

Now in thinking of the parallel with Israel and those who served the Lord, we believe that we are indeed in the days of the Judges. Yet the Lord did use those judges in His work and so in the work of the Lord now we pray that sound clear written truth be preserved for His people. Will you join with us in prayer to this end?

Cleave to the Lord

Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Depend on Him. There is power in Christ; there is sufficiency in Christ for all He would have you do or be. Some have a long season of joy on first believing, but God knows our hearts, and knows that soon we would begin to depend on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our object-not the joy.

Sin no longer remains on you, but the flesh is in you to the end; the old stock will put forth its buds, which must be nipped off as they appear. No fruit can come of it. It is the new nature that bears fruit unto God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this; think of Christ.

As you grow in the knowledge of Christ, a joy comes, deeper than the first joy. I have known Christ for between thirty and forty years, and I can truly say that I have ten thousand times more joy in Him now than I had at first. It is a deeper, calmer joy. The water rushing down a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes much noise, but you will find the water in the plain deeper, calmer and more fit for general use.

Cleave to Christ with purpose of heart. A distracted heart is the bane of Christians. When we are involved with something that is not Christ, we are away from the source of strength. When my soul is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of the world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be a question with you, What harm is there in this and that? But rather it will be, Am I doing this for Christ? Can Christ go along with me in this?

Do not let the world come in and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you young ones. They who are older have had more experience in it, and know more what it is worth. But it all lies shining before you, endeavoring to attract you. Its smiles are deceitful; still it smiles. It makes promises which it cannot keep; still it makes them. Your hearts are too big for the world; it cannot fill them. They are too little for Christ; He fills heaven; He will fill you to overflowing. "With purpose of heart... cleave unto the Lord." He knows how treacherous the heart is, and how soon it would put anything in His place. You will indeed have to learn what is in your own heart.

Abide with God, and you will learn it with Him, and with His grace. If you do not, you will have to learn it with bitter sorrow, through the successful temptations of the devil. But God is faithful. If you have been getting away from Him, and other things have come in and formed a crust, as it were, over your hearts, your joy will not return to you all at once. God will first have you deal with this crust, and get rid of it.

Remember, Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, not the world's. Do not let Satan get between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have gotten away from Him, count on His love. It is His joy to see you back again. Look at the sin with horror, but never wrong Him by distrusting His love. He has loved you, and will love you to the end. Talk much with Jesus. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Do not be satisfied with anything short of close communion of soul with Him who has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood.

A Cloud of Witnesses

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our 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." Heb. 12:1, 2.

We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, not as our spectators, but as giving testimony to us of faith. Still the call is to look away from all else to Jesus, the leader and completer of faith. Neither sentiment nor superstition can do anything here but hinder our running the race well, and this calls for the endurance of faith rather than the energy of the flesh.

Coincidence?

The following incident was told me some time ago. May it serve to strengthen the faith of any who are in difficult, trying circumstances.

A lady occupied in Christian work accompanied an inmate of one of the homes where she labored to the bus. Having bought the woman her ticket and seen her safely off to her destination, she took a bus to her own part of the city.

When the time came to pay the fare, she discovered that her pocket had probably been picked, for her purse was gone. As she had no money, she was obliged to leave the bus. A frail woman, she could not walk the long distance, and she knew no one in the neighborhood. She left the vehicle and walked slowly toward the park, praying to her God and Father and telling Him of her difficulty which was a very real one indeed.

Arriving at the park, she sat down on one of the seats, wondering how God would help her. She knew He would not fail her, so she was kept in peace. In a seemingly idle way, she wrote on the gravel with her umbrella the words, "God is love," and as she got to the last letter of the word "love," she turned up a coin that was black with lying there in the gravel.

Thanking God for sending her just what she needed and had asked for, she continued her journey. The next conductor remarked on the state of the coin, and she said that it was indeed a very discolored one, but that it had been sent her in answer to prayer, by her God and Father. She was not ashamed to tell him before the other passengers how she had come by the money.

Perhaps you may think this finding of a coin pure coincidence. But why? The same God who said, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee," could direct His child's steps to the seat, and her hand to the lost piece of money. So underline in your heart the last word of the text found in Mark 11:22: "Have faith in GOD."

Continuing in Prayer

God exercises our hearts and our faith in delaying to give the answers to our prayers at times. The earnestness of our prayer will be according to the depth of our need and the consciousness that He alone can give the answer. The heart is exercised and kept in dependence, waiting on Him for the reply. Faith is kept alive. Other sources are not looked to when the soul has learned that He alone can do what is needed. God's mighty power is called on through prayer. Prayer is a fitting expression of the newborn soul's dependence on God, in contrast to that nature which always wants to be independent of Him, though it cannot escape His righteous judgment.

Daniel had to wait in fastings and mournings for three whole weeks at one time before he received the reply (Daniel 10). At another time, "While I was speaking," he says, "the answer came" (Daniel 9).

We are not indifferent to the result when the heart can in earnest entreaty wait upon God.

We may find, like Paul, that it is better for us that our desires are withheld. He learned the reason why they were withheld after his thrice-repeated prayer; thus he could boast in that which was the taunt of his enemies and the trial of his friends (2 Cor. 12).

We need to be "filled with the Spirit." We need to have our faith grow. Many are the needs of our hearts, and if God is pleased to bless His people, He exercises their hearts in prayer. Paul was indebted to some praying sister, perhaps, who could agonize in prayer before the Lord for those gifts with which he carried on his service in the gospel field. He could agonize in prayer for those he never saw (Col. 2:1), and Epaphras too could labor earnestly in prayer for those he knew and loved (Col. 4:12).

In the midst of our cares and conflicts we have "to be careful for nothing," but let our "requests be made known unto God." God, who has no cares, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. But we have to "continue in prayer." We also need to "watch in the same," and "with thanksgiving" for His ear which is always opened. One of the exhortations in Rom. 12:12 is "continuing instant in prayer," that is, to persevere in prayer.

The very "importunity" of the man at the unseasonable hour of midnight was the occasion of his obtaining the loaves (Luke 11:8). One can lay down no rules in such cases. The truly exercised heart gets its own answer from God. At times we can with simple confidence "make known" and commit the request to God. At other times the heart is conscious that it cannot but cry to God until the heart is at rest as to the petition. He will not give it till His own time, and meanwhile the soul is kept in earnest exercise; faith is tested, and patience tried, and the heart watches and waits on Him. Again, such is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us, and if we know that He hears us, we know we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14, 15). He listens to everything which is in accordance with His will. He cannot fail in power, and we get the reply. The true heart would ask nothing contrary to His mind and will.

The Cross and the Glory

In the New Testament God has revealed to us two wondrous truths - the cross and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a solemn and blessed subject for the contemplation of our hearts - the death of the Son of God upon Calvary's cross on the earth, and His glorification at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven above. How little our souls enter into these precious things, although the glory of God, and the eternal destiny of the whole of Adam's race, depends upon them. Without the death of Christ there is no salvation; without the resurrection, the death would have been ineffectual.

The death of Christ was the voluntary act of a perfect, sinless, holy Man. Death had no claim upon Him, for death is the wages of sin, and in Him is no sin (1 John 3:5). And death is Satan's power (Heb. 2:14). But Satan had no power over Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14:30. Jesus laid down His life for the glory of the Father, the salvation of His own, and the deliverance of creation. The foundation of all this was perfectly laid in His death. God was infinitely glorified, and sin's judgment borne by the Holy One. He cried, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost.

If all, however, ended there, the cross would simply show that man had wrought his own will against the Christ of God, and that Satan had won the victory. But where is He now? He was buried in the grave, but God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory. The enemy's greatest victory proved to be his greatest defeat. The cross is vacated, the grave empty, and Christ is risen. The resurrection of Christ is a complete and eternal triumph over all the power of the enemy. The whole question of sin, sins, Satan, death, judgment and hell, found its answer at the cross. The resurrection is God's testimony to the whole universe to the fact that His holy claims have all been perfectly met, once and forever, and that He is infinitely glorified in the work of His Son. He has exalted the blessed Man who did it, to His own right hand. The One who was crucified is now the glorified One. The cross is exchanged for the throne. Jesus is made both Lord and Christ. Soon every created intelligence will celebrate His praise and own Him worthy as Man of that exalted place.

We must never separate the glory from the cross. If I am occupied with Christ on the cross only, and my death with Him there, I shall stop far short of my proper blessing and privilege as a Christian. If I am occupied with Christ in glory, and my association with Him there, and forget the cross, I shall become lifted up, and impractical in my walk and ways. The knowledge of the gospel of the glory of Christ involves corresponding responsibility. If Christ, the Beloved in glory, is the measure of my acceptance before God, Christ, and Christ only, is the standard and model for my walk and ways. May God in His rich grace give us to enter more and more into our wonderful position before God, and to walk worthy of our elevated calling in our daily life and circumstances until we behold our Savior face to face.

The Curse of the Law

QUESTION: "Does Gal. 3:13 - 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us' - apply to us Gentiles?"

ANSWER: The Galatian saints were Gentiles by nature, but after being saved they had listened to Judaizing teachers. They began simply by faith, but then sought to perfect their lives by keeping the law. This was a basic departure from the truth of the gospel, and the beloved Apostle takes them to task very sharply for having removed from the grace of Christ to another gospel, which was no gospel at all.

Paul takes up the case of Abraham and shows that the father of the Jews, and the one in whom they boasted, was blessed unconditionally with promises from God. The law was a condition or rule of life, imposed later - on the Jews, to prove their helplessness to answer to God's requirements. It caused sin to become exceeding sinful; that is, what they knew to be wrong by natural conscience became a transgression when the law forbade their doing it.

It was evident then that every Jew was under the curse, for anyone who did not obey the law was cursed. How then was a Jew to be free from the curse which he incurred by failure to keep the law? Simply by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ who had so identified Himself with them that He bore the curse of the broken law in His death. So Paul can add, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He is speaking strictly of the Jews here, and links himself with the believing Jews in the word "us."

But is grace not to flow out to the Gentiles? for they need salvation too, although they were never under the law. Immediately, the Apostle adds, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham [who was blessed apart from and before the law] might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." v. 14. The hanging on the tree then becomes the ground of blessing for poor Gentiles too. Then Paul concludes the point by saying, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." This "we" now embraces all, believing Jews and believing Gentiles.

If Christians put themselves under the law for a rule of life, or for any purpose whatsoever, they are putting themselves under the curse. And those who have the law as a rule of life, greatly lower the standard of walk, for we are identified with Christ and are to live to please Him. Those who thus walk, not only do the things which would have been required by the law, but far transcend legal requirements, and all is done as the willing service of love, not of duty.

Dare to Say No!

The three Hebrew children said, "We will not serve thy gods," and there they rested. They had nothing to do with the results. If the king threw them into the fiery furnace, that was his business, and it was God's business to look after the fire when they were thrown into it. They simply said, No, no we will not.

Dare to say "No!" We are too apt to think what the results will be if we say no. All we have to do is to decide what is right, and stand by it; and if we do not do this, we are not worthy to be called by His name.

Enough

Faith can walk on rough waters as well as on smooth if the eye is kept on the Lord. The Lord said, "Come," to Peter, and that was enough. He who created the elements could make the sea a pavement for His servant. When Christ and His word are kept before the soul, we can walk on the rough sea of life as well as on the smooth waters.

Establishing Priorities

A Christian recently shared with me what he felt was the cause of his downward slide from being a happy believer. He said, "It began with the little things that crept in and stole my time from the Word and prayer."

In our Bible study not long ago we had this verse: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6:33. Here we find that the secret of overcoming is getting our priorities right. As Christians, we have to put the principles of God's kingdom first in our lives. The redeemed march to a different drumbeat. We have been chosen as soldiers of Jesus Christ, and as such are not to be entangled

with the things of this life. The early Christians were

exhorted, "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Acts 11:23.

Our danger is not so much that we can become criminals as that we can become nominal, drifting Christians. The temptations that sap spiritual power in our day include the good books, television, the easy chair, and the credit card. We either move forward or fall backward in those seemingly innocent little moments of decision. If we are to live for our Lord, we must eliminate in order to concentrate. We must establish priorities, and put on the blinders (Pro. 4:25-27). This cuts out the clutter, that in all things our Lord might have the preeminence (Col. 1:18).

The Old Testament prophet, Elijah, found that God speaks in a still, small voice, rather than in a hurricane. The same is true today. In order to hear that still, small voice, we need time alone with our Lord. Taking quiet moments involves discipline and self-control (a fruit of the Spirit-Gal. 5:22, 23), but we can draw this from Him. We can crawl out of bed on time. We can set the tone for the day, rather than being out of tune, and letting the day control us.

When we value something, we will go to a lot of trouble for it. How much do we prize the moments of fellowship with our Savior? Have we grasped the amazing truth that He desires this fellowship, and not just our patronage? How much have we comprehended that we live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?

We arrange our priorities to suit our needs. We have to decide that we need these moments alone with the Lord-that we cannot go on without them. But if these quiet moments are an obligation rather than a personal choice, they will be only a ritual, and will eventually be given up.

Another vital aspect of all this is found in 1 Cor. 3:13. Have you ever noticed what it is about your life, that is going to be judged? The judgment seat of Christ will test the kinds of materials we used to build on that foundation which is Christ.

We are either serving self or Christ. If we seek His fellowship now, there are wonderful and positive benefits here, plus much, much more in that future day. It is blessed to realize too that our Lord initiates this kind of fellowship. He says to the believer, as it were, "Everything I have is yours.

All My righteousness I give to you. The riches of glory are yours." What can we give in return but our sins, our failures, our inabilities-ourselves? Then the believer receives forgiveness, constant love, friendship! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Only the god of this world could deprive debtors to such love of enjoying the Source of it all in those quiet moments. Let us, my Christian friends, by His grace, set our priorities in order. "Seek ye first," and be ever so jealous that the "little foxes" (Song of Sol. 2:15) do not steal those tender moments with our Lord Jesus.

My Christian friend has caused untold grief, heartache, and much dishonor to his Lord. He would give anything if he could have done things differently. But there are no reruns. We get just one chance to pass through this life. We cannot turn back the clock; all we have is from here on.

In another evil day, a man of God said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Josh. 24:15. Let us, too, echo these words by lives that demonstrate that they have been won and are controlled by the love of Christ. What we do with what we've received proves our satisfaction with it.

Eternal Security: Five Impossible Things

Five impossible things must happen before a saved soul can be lost.

Someone has to pluck us out of the hand of God Himself. "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." John 10:29.

Someone has to break the seal of ownership which made us God's purchased possession. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." Eph. 1:13, 14.

Someone has to cast out the indwelling Spirit of God. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. 3:16. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." John 14:16.

Someone has to separate us from the love of Christ. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:31-39.

5) Someone has to erase the believer's name from the Lamb's Book of Life. "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20. "Those... whose names are in the book of life." Phil. 4:3. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. 20:15. "They which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Rev. 21:27.

Our names, from the palms of His hands

Eternity will not erase;

Impressed on His heart they remain,

In marks of indelible grace;

And we to the end shall endure,

As sure as the earnest is given;

More happy, but not more secure,

The spirits departed to heaven.

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ

It is one thing for a perishing sinner to be saved by Christ, and another thing to go on to know Christ when saved.

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

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

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

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

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

But in course of time this was all to change. Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, was furnished with letters from the high priest, and started for Damascus in order to bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed the Lord met him (Acts 9:1-8; 26:12-18). A light above the brightness of the sun shone suddenly round about him, and he fell to the earth. But much as he deserved judgment, it was as his Savior, and not as his Judge, that the Lord stopped him in his mad career and so we find him saying in 1 Tim. 1:14-16, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of

whom I am thief.

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

From that time forth Saul of Tarsus (whose name was changed to Paul) was fervent in heralding the gospel of the grace of God. The devil's slave became the Lord's freedman, and willing bondman in the glad tidings.

Now, in Phil. 3:4-7, we may learn from Paul's own pen the wondrous effect produced upon his soul by this mighty change-"If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." He could look around upon His kinsmen after the flesh and say, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." He had been circumcised the eighth day, according to the original institution that God gave to Abraham; he was of the stock of Israel, the privileged earthly people that were not to be reckoned among the nations, and to whom pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Rom. 9:4. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest and favored son; he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, ranking among the highest of his kinsmen; as touching the law, a Pharisee, the straitest sect of the Jews' religion. Concerning zeal, he persecuted the Church, the body and bride of Christ, the dearest object of His heart, and touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless, a man so strict in his observance of the law of God, that he walked without blame in the midst of his fellows.

But then, having summed up all that he might trust in (and things, too, which many still trust in, though far beneath his standard) he gives us their true value in the presence of God (and it was there he had learned it), saying, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Notice that he says "loss for Christ." Many slur it over, as though it read, gave up for Christ. Such a thought apparently never entered his mind. Gave up! that was not how Paul reckoned. He counted himself a gainer, not a loser; he would have been a loser to go on with those things when he had Christ; he learned the end of the flesh, as well as the putting away of his sins, by the death of Christ. To hold to what was ended there was to be a loser both here and hereafter.

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

How is it with you? Is Christ your Savior? If so, how are you looking on the things that are a gain to you after the flesh? Are you clinging to them at the expense of what is due to Christ? Do you begrudge even giving them up, and retain them with a bad conscience? Is it a difficult task? If so, how far short of counting them loss! Surely if we know a Savior in glory, and rightly value Him, it ought not to be so. There was no effort on Paul's part. Everything beneath the sun had been eclipsed when the light above its brightness had shone round about him. Blinded for three days at his conversion, his eyes were again opened to be fixed upon a new object, a Savior in glory, who

had saved him, and in whose company he was shortly destined to spend an eternity of bliss. Oh, that we like him may be able to say in the sight of God, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ"!

We have been considering the effect produced upon Paul at his conversion, an event which transpired about the year 34, but writing to the saints at Philippi presumably some thirty years or so afterward he says: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. 3:8. In verse 7 he speaks of having counted loss for Christ, things which were a gain to him. This was when he first knew Christ as his Savior. Then he adds, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss." There was no question about it, no hesitation whatever. "I count." For some thirty years he had pursued his undeviating course toward the goal that he had before him. Was he weary and full of regret on account of his self-sacrifice? No; he was occupied with Christ, and was then, as at the beginning, superior to circumstances which his heart naturally would have sought after and turned back to if he had allowed room for the flesh.

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

How many thousands know Christ as their Savior, but stop there, apparently satisfied with the assurance of their salvation. They may, perhaps, be happy to speak about salvation to others, and yet have no desire in their souls to go on and increase in the knowledge of the One who saved them! Other objects engross their minds more or less to the exclusion of Christ. They are thankful to know Him as a Savior, but shrink from saying, "Christ Jesus my Lord." He is not their all. The will is more or less active, and certain aspects of the world may attract, producing in them a divided heart. To own the Lordship of Christ would mean a broken will henceforth subject to Him, and the world esteemed a worthless thing, but they are not prepared for this.

Notice that the Apostle adds, "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Christ was no mere doctrine to him, but a living Person in glory that engrossed his soul, and more than satisfied his heart. For the knowledge of Him he had

suffered the loss of everything that the flesh values, and was enabled, after thirty years' experience in the path of faith, to count it as so much filth, that he might win Christ, or have Christ for his gain. In this he is an example to every believer in Jesus. May God in His rich grace enable us to sing, with the heart as well as with the lip-

"Oh, fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see."

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

Everything loss for Him below,

Taking the cross where'er we go,

Showing to all, where once He trod,

Nothing but Christ, the Christ of God.

Nothing save Him in all our ways,

Giving the theme for endless praise;

Our whole resource along the road,

Nothing but Christ, the Christ of God.

The Father's Love

We need to be reminded of the distinct present blessing which it is our privilege to enjoy, resulting from the knowledge of the love wherewith the Father loves the Son. It might well stagger the soul to hear that the love wherewith the saints are loved of God is according to that with which He loves Jesus-"as Thou hast loved Me." Our companionship with the Lord in glory will be the manifestation of this; then, even the world shall know it. But, without waiting for that day of manifestation, Jesus speaks in John 17 of ministering to us, by the Spirit, the present joy and comfort of it.

How is the love of the Father toward us shown? In giving His Son to be "the propitiation for our sins."

This is well known. But we can go on further and speak of the Spirit's enabling us to believe on and prize the Son. "The spirit of a man" is not capable of appreciating "the Son," that best and blessed gift of God. We do not prize as we should the grace which has led us to believe. All of us know, too, that this grace was not of human origin, but that it came from whence Jesus came; it followed the gift. We need to remember also the love of the Father to the Son, of which we partake through our union with the Son. The grace which led us to receive the Son has put us on ground where we may learn more of the fullness and depth of love. The special love of the Father is ours. I am not speaking now of Christ being ours, but of that which is Christ's being ours.

Notice John 17:25, 26. Here a love is spoken of as resting upon us because we have believed on and love Jesus. We all acknowledge that we could not love the Lord Jesus but by the Spirit. When we have met Him as our Savior, we can see that beauty in Him in which the Father can rest with delight and favor. The heart that rests on Jesus and God's delight in Him meets the full love of the Father. Resting on the Lord Jesus, we are to expect a fuller manifestation of the Father's love.

John 16:26, 27 tells us, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." What is the meaning of this? Is it to take from us the comfort of the intercession of Jesus on our behalf? No, but it is intended to remove from the heart the feeling that the Lord Jesus is the originating cause of the Father's love. The Lord Jesus has given liberty to that love-made the way for it to flow out. It is a most mistaken, most mischievous notion, that the standing of the Lord Jesus toward us is that of averting the judgment of an angry God. The love of God could not, it is true, flow out fully till the work of the Son was perfected, but the gift of the Son originated in the love of God.

"If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." John 14:23. Here we see communion with the Father and the Son connected with obedience; it shows a further joy of the Father's love consequent upon obedience. Obedience itself must be the result of love, but then it introduces us into a fuller sense of the Father's love. This was the particular kind of love in which Jesus Himself dwelt when here, for He says, "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." This is the plainest

announcement that we likewise, by virtue of union with Him, may so walk as to enjoy this full manifestation of the Father's love. The question might naturally arise in the mind, What amount of disobedience will hinder? I believe that this manifestation of the Father and the Son unto our souls will be just in proportion to our obedience. The realization of our union with Jesus at the right hand of God will work obedience in us. Then every step that we take, every act of love, every expression of love in intercession for others, makes way for this further manifestation of the Father's love. The soul urged forward by love to Him who has loved it with such a love, is introduced into a further enjoyment of love. It is one act of God's grace to urge forward the soul to obedience, another act of the same grace to meet and bless it in obedience.

Felix Trembled

For almost 2000 years "the faith in Christ" has commanded the attention of the learned and the unlearned, the great and small alike.

True, it has received different treatments at their hands. The wicked heart of man may neglect, refuse and despise it; or, on the other hand, by grace man may believe it and thus become the happy possessor of its manifold blessings. The results are on opposite poles, yet such are the claims, the promises, and the revelations of this faith in Christ so that, at least curiosity is awakened, and people are forced to listen.

Felix, a Roman governor of Judea, sent for Paul in order to hear from his lips concerning the faith in Christ.

The Apostle Paul was sent to Felix as a prisoner, and was accused before him as a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He declared that the things laid to his charge could not be proved but He confessed that after the way that they called heresy, so he worshipped God, exercising himself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and men.

Now a religion that leads to the worship of God, and a conscience void of offense, cannot be, after all, very heretical. No doubt it may be stigmatized as heresy by those whose consciences are not tender, and this was the condition of Paul's accusers who were, like himself in earlier days, kicking against the pricks. Such a moral triumph on the part of the accused, led Felix to desire further information, and for this cause, as we have seen, he sent for him.

Perhaps he expected to hear some clever theory, to be initiated into some strange mystery, or listen to some obscure system of philosophy.

He little thought that the faith in Christ would prove itself to be anything so plain, so homely, so personal, and withal, that it would place himself-the unjust, intemperate sinner-face to face with "judgment to come," or that he would tremble at the truth he could not deny.

"Felix trembled"! And why? Because Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. The governor was anything but righteous or sober. He was partial in his administration, and voluptuous in his life. These home thrusts must have cut deeply, supplemented as they were by the stern fact of "judgment to come."

Felix quailed in view of judgment, yet only said, "Go thy way for this time." Solemn request, indeed! but how often repeated.

The jailer of Philippi trembled, but thank God, he said, "What must I do to be saved?" It was not "Go thy way" with him. He felt his condition-he owned his guilt-the answer came, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

A Few Things I See by Faith in Christ

In Christ promised I see the blessed purpose of God to glorify Himself in the Person of a Man, notwithstanding the utter failure and sin of Adam, and to overrule his wickedness, and to bless him in spite of himself.

In Christ incarnate I see for the first time upon the earth a holy Man without sin, a Man in whom God could find the perfect joy and satisfaction of His own heart, a Man who delighted in the will of God, even unto death. TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD.

In Christ crucified I see God infinitely glorified in the scene where He was dishonored, the power of Satan overcome by the weakness of God, the whole judgment of sin borne once and forever. Man's cup of iniquity is full too, but "The blood of Jesus Christ His [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin. "

In Christ buried I see the Man of God's eternal counsels gone for the moment into the lower parts of the earth to rob the grave of its victory and to vanquish completely him who held the power of death.

In Christ risen I see the whole power of the enemy vanquished, his greatest victory proved to be his greatest defeat, and the believer's justification, reconciliation, and everlasting salvation secured forever and ever.

In Christ glorified I see God's answer to the death of His Son, the Man Christ Jesus exalted in highest heavenly glory, being a testimony to the whole universe, angelic and human, of God's own estimate of His work and Person.

In Christ seated and crowned I see a witness that He rests from the work that He accomplished alone upon the cross once for all, and which never needs the slightest addition in any way whatever-a finished work.

In Christ's coming for His own I see the realization of the glorious and certain hope of every believing heart, the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of God in Christ before the world began, and the fulfillment of His exceeding great and precious promises.

In Christ manifested in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords, I see also the fulfillment of all His promises in relation to the kingdom, and the blessing of the whole creation-responsible or irresponsible- whether angelic, human, animal, or vegetable.

In Christ's giving up all at the end to God I see the glorious and eternal accomplishment of all His immutable and unsearchable counsels, purposes, plans-revealed or unrevealed-everlasting righteousness dwelling in the scene of God's eternal rest, and the eternal blessing of redeemed man.

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. 9:15.

"To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." Rom. 16:27.

Gehazi

It seems to me that Gehazi stands here (2 Kings 8:4-6) in a grievous position. Smitten by the hand of God because his heart clung to earth, even in the presence of Jehovah's mighty and long-suffering testimony, he is now a parasite in the king's court, relating the wonderful things in which he no longer took part. This poor world grows weary enough of itself to lead it to take some pleasure in hearing anything spoken of that has reality and power. Provided that it does not reach the conscience, they will listen to it for their amusement, taking credit to themselves perhaps for an enlarged and a liberal mind which is not enslaved by that which they can yet recognize philosophically in its place. But that is a sad position, which makes it evident that formerly we were connected with a testimony, while now we only relate its marvels at court. Nevertheless God makes use of it, and it does not follow that there was no truth in Gehazi. But to rise in the world, and entertain the world with the mighty works of God, is to fall very deeply.

The Gifts of an Ascended Christ

Eph. 4:1-11

The first exhortations concerning our walking worthy of our vocation are directed to "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Nothing is more practical, nothing more dear to the Lord's heart, than this manifested oneness, and though its full restoration is now impossible, the principle on which it was founded can still be owned, and obedience to the Word of God can be exhibited.

Does the oneness then, so strongly insisted upon in Scripture, imply a lifeless uniformity? No. In all God's works there is variety; men's minds are constituted differently; and it is impracticable to mold all to the same monotonous pattern. No two portions are alike, and the endless differences of its bones, veins, muscles, and ligaments, all contribute to its healthy action as a whole. Yet, the differences do not imply division. The Apostle points this out in 1 Cor. 12:17-20. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body." The same fact as to diversity of gifts in one body is presented in the epistle to the Ephesians.

After dwelling strongly on the manifestation of unity, the Apostle goes on to say, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." vv. 7, 8. The second of these verses explains the sense in which the word "grace" is used in the first. It is not that display of grace by which sinners are saved, but the grace by which believers are endowed with the gifts of an ascended Christ. The grace, of course, is the same in both instances, but exercised in a different matter.

There is a marked distinction between the way in which gifts are spoken of in Ephesians and in Corinthians. In writing to the assembly at Corinth the Apostle was giving directions as to the use of gifts in the assembly, which is regarded as the house of God on earth, administered by the Holy Ghost. The teaching, therefore, does not emphasize the origin of gifts, but their distribution and exercise which is the proper circle of the Spirit's activity. "To one," we read, "is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit," and so on through the other gifts; "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." 1 Cor. 12:8-11. So the Spirit's sovereignty in regulating the exercise of gift in the assembly, and what gifts might be used in the assembly are explained.

In Ephesians the question is not the exercise of gift, but its origin and its object. The object is, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." v. 12. The origin is Christ Himself, not acting in His sovereign rights as the eternal Son of God, but in His acquired rights as the victorious, risen, and ascended Man. In the earlier chapters we see God's "mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him

at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [age], but also in that which is to come." Eph. 1:19-21. It is in virtue of this victory and exaltation that Christ now bestows gifts on believers. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." v. 8.

To lead captivity captive is a poetical expression signifying the complete triumph over a power by which one has formerly been subjugated. It is said of Israel in reference to Babylon, "They shall take them captives, whose captives they were." Isa. 14:2. The words are found in the song of Deborah, when celebrating the victory of Barak over the armies of Jabin, by whom the Israelites had long been oppressed: "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Judg. 5:12. It is adopted in the passage here quoted by the Apostle from the Psalms, where it is clearly prophetic of Christ's triumph: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men." Psalm 68:18.

Man, as fallen, was in bondage under the fear of death, and under the power of the devil. Jesus came as man and while ever perfect within and without, He entered into our wretchedness, charged Himself with our responsibilities and went down under our judgment, so that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. 2:14. Having thus descended and conquered the foe who held us in captivity, He ascended in triumph, and received gifts from God in His character as the risen, victorious Man. Hence it is said, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." vv. 9, 10. It was in consequence of His humbling Himself and taking the lowest place that He obtained this victory, and in virtue of this victory He receives "gifts for men" (Psalm 68:18), or, as the margin reads, "in the man," that is, in His character as man.

The Spirit of God, in quoting this passage, has somewhat varied and extended its scope. The psalm, after declaring Christ's victory, says, "Thou hast received gifts for men;" the Apostle quotes it: "and gave gifts unto men." Eph. 4:8. The Old Testament shows Christ, as man, receiving gifts in consequence of His triumph. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit applies the passage to show the actual bestowing of these gifts on those for whom they were acquired. Nor is this all. The psalm describes the time when God arises, His enemies are scattered and God is blessed "in the congregation, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel;" when "Because of Thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto Thee;" and when "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." All this looks on to the reign of Christ in glory and majesty-to the full blessing of Israel and the world. It is then that He receives "gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

In the epistle Christ is shown as bestowing these gifts before His reign and the period of earthly blessing-bestowing them in the sphere of His present interests "unto every one of us." Though the victory has been won, its consequences, in respect to Israel and the world, are not yet seen. But toward the Church He already exercises His rights in bestowing the gifts He has acquired. How remarkably this insertion of the present use of gifts, not alluded to in the Old Testament, agrees with the character of the Church as a mystery "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Though some special gifts are named in Eph. 4:11, the language used in verse 7 takes in a wider field. It is said, "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." In the parable of the talents the Lord distributes "to every man according to his several ability." Matt. 25:15. This makes it clear that all believers are entrusted with some gift to use for their absent Lord. So in the text before us the grace spoken of is given not merely to a few, but "unto every one of us." In connection with Christ the Head, "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." v. 16. While the special gifts needed for public labor are confined to comparatively few, each believer has some gift for the edifying of the body. In Romans 12, where the question, is the faithful and diligent use of the gifts bestowed, the Apostle names, among others, liberality, showing mercy, and ministry (or service) in the widest sense of the word. A vast circle of responsibility and activity is thus opened up, and a set of gifts brought to light which are equally distinct from the miraculous sign-gifts named in the Corinthians, and from the gifts for public teaching. In this wider sense, all receive some gift for the use of 'which they are responsible.

In verse 11 the writer comes to a special class of gifts. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." It does not say that the apostles or others received gifts, but that they were gifts. The subject is not the gifts bestowed upon individual believers, but the gifts bestowed upon the Church in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Nothing is said about the continuance of these gifts, and we must look at them separately to see if they were meant to be permanent or only for a specific time period. As to the Apostle, the distinguishing feature was his ability to bear testimony to Christ's resurrection. Thus in the case of the new apostle chosen by lot, the object, as explained by Peter, was that he might "be a witness with us of His resurrection." Acts 1:22. And even Paul, who had never seen Jesus either during His life or in the forty days before His ascension, rests his apostleship on the same ground. "Am I not an apostle" he asks. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" 1 Cor. 9:1. In speaking of Christ's resurrection, he says, "And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not

meet to be called an apostle." (1 Cor. 15:8, 9), thus

again associating his apostleship with his having seen the risen Christ. Since this was a condition of apostleship, it is clear that no one who has not seen Christ risen could be an apostle; in other words, apostles were only temporary gifts to the Church. The apostles and prophets were, so to speak, the foundation of the Church, for we are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." No doubt the foundation is permanent, and in this sense the gift is permanent. But this very fact precludes the thought of a succession of apostles, for how could there be a succession of foundations to the same building? The idea of a succession or revival of apostles is a mere fancy of the mind of man, entirely opposed to Scripture, and subversive of all that is there taught concerning apostolic qualifications and functions.

The prophet was also a foundation gift. It was to prophets as well as to apostles that the mystery which had before been hidden was revealed by the Spirit. In certain cases, too, the prophet

foretold future events. In all these characters the gift of a prophet was only temporary. On the other hand, that part of the prophetic gift which consists of speaking "unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort," and in this way edifying the Church (1 Cor. 14:3, 4), has never been removed, though whether those possessing it are prophets, in the scriptural sense of the word, is at least doubtful.

The gifts of evangelists, pastors, and teachers are of course permanent, and require little explanation. An evangelist is one who brings glad tidings. It may be well to observe that there is nothing to identify evangelization with public preaching. No doubt many evangelists are public preachers, but it would be a great mistake to limit the term to just those who preach publicly. Perhaps some of the most largely blessed evangelists are those who, by their writings or by their private visits and conversation, have set forth Christ, with little or no qualification for addressing large audiences. No one for a moment would speak slightingly of preaching, but it is easier to be led by a desire for display in this work than in work of a quieter and less public character. Moreover, the effect produced on the conscience and on the heart by the presentation of the truth in private is often far deeper and more durable than that wrought amid the excitement of public preaching.

God's Design

"I was passing through Columbus, Ohio, some years ago," says William Jennings Bryan, "and stopped to eat in a restaurant in the depot. My attention was called to a slice of watermelon, and I ordered it and ate it. I was so pleased with the melon that I asked the waiter to dry some of the seeds that I might take them home and plant them in my garden. That night a thought came into my mind-I would use that watermelon as an illustration. So, the next morning when I reached Chicago, I had enough seeds weighed to find out that it would take about five thousand watermelon seeds to weigh a pound, and I estimated that the watermelon weighed about forty pounds. Then I applied mathematics to the watermelon.

"A few weeks before, someone, I don't know who, had planted a little seed in the ground. Under the influence of sunshine and shower that little watermelon seed had taken off its coat and gone to work; it had gathered from somewhere two hundred thousand times its own weight, and had forced that enormous weight through a tiny stem and built a watermelon. On the outside it had put a covering of green, within that a rind of white, and within that a core of red, and then it had scattered through the red little seeds, each one capable of doing the same work over again.

"What architect drew the plan? Where did that little watermelon seed get its tremendous strength? Where did it find its flavoring extract and its coloring matter? How did it build a watermelon? Until you can explain a watermelon, do not be too sure that you can set limits to the power of the Almighty, or tell just what He would do or how He would do it. The most learned man in the world cannot explain a watermelon, but the most ignorant man can eat a watermelon and enjoy it. God has given us the things that we need, and He has given us the knowledge necessary to use those things, and the truth that He has revealed to us is infinitely more important for our welfare than it would be to understand the mysteries that He has seen fit to conceal from us.

"So it is with Christianity. If you ask me if I can understand everything in the Bible, I answer, No. I understand some things that I did not understand ten years ago, and if I live ten years longer, I hope some things will be clear that are now obscure. But there is something more important than understanding everything in the Bible. It is this: if we will only try to live up to the things that we DO understand, we will not have time to worry about the things that we DO NOT understand.

"One thing is perfectly clear and may be tested by anyone. 'But as many as received Him [Jesus Christ], to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.' John 1:12."

God's Provision for the Wilderness

Heb. 4:9-16

This chapter shows us not only the painstaking of God's interest in us and care for us, but also that that interest is taken in us by One who knows the path we are treading. He has trodden it Himself, and so it leads our hearts to rest quietly in Him and wait on Him who has our interests so thoroughly at heart.

In John 13, the dealing of the Lord with souls is restorative. Here it is more preventive, and with the purpose of establishing our souls in the fact that there is a rest remaining for us. It is a rest that can never be disturbed, and He has made provision for carrying us on safely until we reach it.

When we understand what is in this world, and what we are in ourselves, how fearful the heart becomes. It only finds the answer to these fears in turning to Him whose grace has anticipated and fully met them. How blessed to know, then, that there is not only a rest, but a rest that cannot be disturbed, and that is reserved for us. And we rejoice, too, in the thought of God then having everything suited to Himself. It is not only our rest, it is the rest of God.

Now, through grace, we enjoy rest of conscience and rest of heart in Christ. He comes to us with both, even here. It is, however, rest in Christ, not in anything that is around us. He does not promise us rest in our surroundings. The moment we look upward we can rest entirely there. Here, with any loved earthly object, the thought intrudes that something may come to take it away from me. My joy is a thing that I may lose tomorrow. But the activity of the grace of God is to establish the hearts of weak and feeble ones in the blessed fact that there is a rest remaining there that cannot be disturbed. First, He removes any difficulties from their minds as to the rest already given them, and then assures them that there is a rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Sometimes saints of God may think that there is not much justice here, but that all will be right one day when we get up there. Though this may be in a certain sense true, it is not enough; at least, not if it promotes a thought of indifference as to the present moment. God would teach us the importance of the present time, and appreciation of the provision that He has made for us in it. There is the grace of the Lord which we are called to lay hold upon now. It is the tendency of our hearts to try to get out of the circumstances we are in-to hope for some change that will carry us into some path easier to nature than the one we are placed in-instead of making use of God's grace to enable us to walk where we are, so as to please Him. Of course I am not speaking of wrong circumstances; if we are in such, the only thing is to look to God to deliver us out of them at once.

The Lord's interest in us is shown in the verses we have read. He has not only established us in the sense of His favor as to the forgiveness of our sins, and the knowledge that a rest, God's rest, is remaining for us at the end of our course, but He also is greatly concerned how we go on until we arrive at that rest. So the Apostle

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

As soon as we accept this truth, what is the effect of it on our souls? The heart is inclined to answer, Who could maintain that standard of acceptability in the midst of such circumstances as these? The tendency, then, is to lower the standard of what God expects of His people, because of the difficulties of the way. But I repeat, that the first thing is to get a firm hold of the greatness of this grace of God wherein we stand; then I so well understand His grace that I can welcome this statement that His word is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," and that "all things are naked and opened" unto His eyes. Do you think I can welcome such words unless I understand His grace? When I have the sense that God is watching every step of my path, the tendency is to say, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" Psalm 139:7.

God, however, knows my need and feebleness. I learn through His Word that there is One living at God's right hand for me—One whose strength meets my feebleness—so that I can welcome God's dealings with me. I learn God's thoughts about me, but I do not seek to get away from Him, because it is His grace that detains me in His presence while He deals with me.

He knows exactly where we are and what we are passing through, and He is not one who underrates the difficulties of the way. We know what it is if someone comes to sympathize with us in trial who cannot adequately enter into our feelings; it is never thus with the Lord. He enters fully into the very depths of our sorrows. Our great High Priest is on "the throne of grace." How well He knows what suits me! How perfectly He enters into my need! As He ministers to us His sympathy and power, does not each one of our hearts say, "That comes from One who understands me—from One who knows all about me?"

Have you not ever been struck by Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple? As you dwell upon it, you get the sense that here is a man who feels that the greatest good he can desire for his people is that they may find that God has an ear for them. And when you read Psalm 107, you acknowledge how right Solomon was, and that he estimated truly when he judged that when men were in difficulties their greatest boon would be to have God's ear—that when they should cry unto the Lord, and He would deliver them and save them out of their distresses. The theme of Solomon's prayer is this: that man's greatest blessing consists in being connected with the greatness of God, and that his greatest benefit is for God to give assurance of His ear.

As to Solomon, God more than answers his prayer. He goes far beyond it. Solomon prays that God's "eyes may be open toward this house night and day." God answers, "Mine eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually." Is that not a wonderful answer? When in their difficulties and their trials, when even in the consciousness that their own folly had brought them into such straits, yet they might turn to Him whose eyes would be there continually.

Our hearts, too, must confess that the greatest benefit God can give us down here is the consciousness that, in all we pass through, we have His ear. God's thought is first to establish us in grace, and then to instill in us an acute awareness that all things are naked and opened unto the

eyes of Him with whom we have to do. What a word for us! Have we the sense, day by day and hour by hour, that we have to do with God? How simple it makes things, and yet how serious!

Notice in Hebrews 12 the number of ways in which the grace of Christ comes into the heart; it points out one thing after another. God brings a number of admonitions to bear on the hearts of those who were ready to turn aside. What were their difficulties? Well, they had come out from Judaism with expectations savoring rather of the future kingdom and glory than of the daily cross of Jesus Christ. They expected to find in their present association with Christ a path on earth which did not come to pass, and so they were disappointed and discouraged. Hesitating in their steps, these questioned in their hearts whether the path they were treading was of God; and they were ready to turn back. God sees what a dangerous moment it is for them-the moment of hesitance and of being cast down-and how the enemy watched for it. See how beautifully He brings in Esau just at the very moment when his history would be a warning to them.

How does He warn them? Well, the question is, Under what circumstances was it that Esau sold his birthright? It was in a moment of pressure and weariness; he says, so to speak, "I am at the point of death, and what profit shall this birthright be to me?"and he settles for the present. A mess of pottage found him in these circumstances, and he took it. Now remember Esau, says the Apostle; look what happened then in a time of weakness and hesitance, and take warning. And for your encouragement, you have not come to mount Sinai, the place of law, but to mount Zion, the place where grace was brought in. And is grace presented in a way that makes us indifferent as to our path here? Not at all. It is, "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." Is this being indifferent or careless?

This is a test to many souls. They do not like the thought of God's being a consuming fire, and they say, Oh, that is God apart from Christ. It is not at all; it is "our God." God is holy, and He will have His people be "partakers of His holiness." In Lev. 9:24, the holiness of God accepts by fire what they had done, but in Lev. 10:2, the same holiness refuses by fire the presumption that disregards its claim. God is holy and God ever remains the same, and thank God that He does. He never changes in His love for us, and it is also an immense mercy that He never changes in His holiness.

God knows how to bring Himself before us maintaining both these scriptures. He separated Moses to His service when He sent Him from the burning bush to be the deliverer of Israel. That was to be the aspect of God's holiness that was to be engraved upon his soul in his service. But if I am not established in grace, it is not a bit of comfort to me, rather the reverse, that God has His eye upon me and is dealing with me as I go along down here. I shall be like Jonah; I shall seek to flee from God's presence. He knew that his prophetic character would go, and that he should be made to look small before the Ninevites. But you know his history, and how God had to have His own way with him to get him back to the true path, and to bring him to the point of saying, No one will do for me but God; "Salvation is of the Lord."

If we have to do with this wonderful grace of God, we can welcome the fact that everything about us is open to the eye of God. When David hears God's words of grace, he goes in and sits before the Lord, and that forms his prayer. God had revealed wonderful things to him, and he says, "Therefore hath Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee." Who taught him his prayer? It was as he heard God pour out His heart in blessing for David, that David's heart

answered to God's. And that is what true prayer is.

God does not underrate our difficulties, and He does not overrate our strength; He does not take us to be what we are not. But as we face the gravity of what it is to be in this evil world, we find the provision that God has made for us to go through it. I cannot do without drawing upon all this grace. There is no superfluous provision made. The question is, Are we willing to put ourselves in God's hands and ask Him to have His own way with us? We are not called to anything that God does not give us grace to walk in. Are we ready to say with Peter, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water"?and are we prepared to hear Him say, "Come"? The only "if" in the question was "if it be Thou." Our poor hearts have fifty other "ifs", but the only one for the eye of faith is "if it be Thou." And He said, "Come."

Anyone really seeking to follow the Lord must expect Him to say, "Come." It does not depend on anything in ourselves; it is all on the one "if" and His word "Come." And we are not to take one or two steps and then to sink. No; we are to go on. Why did Peter sink? Because evidently there was lurking in his heart the thought, Look, Peter, here you are walking on the water! Can a man go on quietly walking on the water, quietly maintaining what is for the Lord amid adverse surroundings? Provision has been made for our doing so by One who knows all that is around us.

Now if these things are true, if this painstaking provision and love are true, what should be the effect upon us? It leaves us without excuse.

I have looked at this subject in a suggestive way, desiring that God's grace may lead our hearts on into the consideration of His care for us along our pathway-into a deeper understanding of that grace which has made such full provision for our need and weakness, that we are able to go on unmoved, even amidst difficulties and trials.

Going on to Perfection

In Heb. 6:1 we are told to "go on unto perfection," but certainly it is not to perfection in the flesh. This was the error of the Galatian believers, and brought strong reproof upon them. They were remonstrated by the Spirit of God as being "foolish," "bewitched," and as those who did "not obey the truth," in that having "begun in the Spirit," they afterward sought to be made perfect in the flesh (Gal. 3:3). They "did run well," but they seemed to have lost sight of what Christ crucified had done for them, and to have forgotten that they had two natures, that "which is born of the flesh" and "that which is born of the Spirit." They had let slip the blessed fact that they were now "not in the flesh" (though the flesh was in them), but "in the Spirit," a new creation in Christ Jesus, which neither circumcision, law, nor any ordinances of any kind, could bring about or alter. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Gal. 6:15.

It is certain, then, that the going on to perfection mentioned here does not support the false notion, so subversive of Christianity, and so severely censured in Scripture, of seeking to be made perfect in the flesh. As to moral principle, we should, as God's children, seek to imitate our Father, as the Lord said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48. This is a totally different thought from being made perfect in the flesh. The truth is that the believer will not lose this evil principle in him, which is born after the flesh and in which dwells nothing good, until the Lord comes, or until the believer is called home to glory through death.

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

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

"Therefore," said the writer to these Hebrews, connecting this portion with what had gone before, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." What seems to have brought the writer to this point in the epistle was that he desired to say "many things" to them about the "high priest... after the order of Melchisedec," the Son in heaven, but they were "dull of hearing." They did not have the sense of the contrast between Judaism and Christianity, but were so taken up with Jewish things which dimly pointed to Christ, instead of with Christ Himself, that their state of soul was low indeed. The inspired writer knew they would not advance until they recognized the Messiah now in heaven as a totally distinct thing, contrasted with the Jewish system which still surrounded them, for the temple was then standing, and some "shadowy things" of Judaism were still going on. Deliverance could only come by their being taken up with the personal glory of the Son, the eternal efficacy of His one offering, His all-prevailing and unchangeable priesthood, and His present intercession for us in the sanctuary above. Here we have perfection, a perfection which not only has its source in divinely "perfect love," but one which gives "perfect peace" to the believer, because he has a perfect conscience and a perfect way of approach to God.

To Christ in heaven the writer of the epistle directed the hearts of these Hebrews. Likewise, when we are under the Spirit's guidance, we pass through the various chapters with our feet consciously on earth, but with our eyes directed to the glorified Son of man in heaven.

In chapter 1 we look at the Son, by whom the worlds were made, who, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." v. 3.

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

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

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

In chapter 5 we see Him as the Man, yet God's Son, who was on earth offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him out of death, but now Priest by divine appointment after the order of Melchisedec. "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee.... Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec." vv. 5-10.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is clearly the mind of God that we should now, while on earth, know the heaven opened to faith by the rent veil. It is also His mind that we should have personal occupation with our Lord Jesus Christ there. This truth delivers us from a weak and infantile state of soul. It is not "milk," but "strong meat," because it ministers to us the perfections of Christ in heaven, the eternal efficacy of His one offering, and of His divinely-appointed and unchangeable priesthood as sitting on the throne of God.

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

hearts delight to sing-

"O fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see."

H.H. Snell

Grace and Glory

2 Chron. 9:1-12

It is grace which is exhibited in David, and glory in Solomon. Grace had a very full display in David. It raised him from being an outcast to a place of honor; it comforted and sustained him in sorrow, restored him from wandering, and kept him to the end in safety. But when the time came for glory to shine forth, grace having thus displayed itself to the full, David delivers the throne into the hand of Solomon.

Each of these, grace and glory, has its peculiar method. Grace only divides the scene with other principles; glory forms it all alone. Grace meets David in his degradation, sorrow, and defilement, and brings honor, comfort, and restoration, leaving the struggle between the former and the latter things in measure to the end, and the whole a divided empire. But glory holds the entire scene at its disposal, and leaves either a trace or a reflection of itself on everything. It is not God's bringing out His resources to mingle with man's circumstances, but it is the supreme presence of the Lord forming the whole sphere of the action itself. This can be seen in the chapter we are considering. There is no darkness at all upon the scene abroad, nor working of nature in the heart within-no trace of man or of his passions; the finger of God and the Spirit of God delineate and animate the whole picture.

The Queen of Sheba is the witness of this. Her consciousness of what she saw tells us of glory being everywhere in the regions of the king of Israel-the stirrings of her own heart tell us of the absence of all the ways and principles of nature. She saw not the slightest thing that did not reflect the glory. As the stars of the heaven differ in their glories, but each of them is glorious and lends something to the sum magnificence, so it is here. There is the house of the king, with the ascent up to the house of God, but there is also the meat of Solomon's table, and the apparel of his servants, and each contributes to the glorious whole. The glory was leaving its reflection on all she saw. It might have a small part in the account, but still it was glorious. And because it was small, it was even more worthy of notice by the Spirit-led soul that delights to put honor on the uncomely member. This enabled the queen to give greater testimony to the fact that glory was everywhere. Just as another voice of the same Spirit, anticipating the sanctity or cleanness of the antitype of Solomon's day, tells us of "Holiness unto the Lord" being, at that time, upon "the bells of the horses," and that "the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar" (Zech. 14). The glory had taken over the whole scene, and there was nothing hidden from the reach of its beams. It was a morning without clouds-there was no shadow anywhere. All was in the light. The very equipage of the attendants and their deportment reflected it. All was delivered into the liberty of the glory (Rom. 8:21) and fashioned by the power of it.

The kingdom within was, however, as excellent in its own way as the kingdom without. If the day dawned around, the day-star had arisen in the heart of the queen of Sheba. There was no blemish of nature or of the flesh in her spirit, as there was no dimness or uncertainty in the scene around her. She was small in comparison with the king in Zion but in spite of this, she delighted in all that

she saw, without envy or covetousness. She sought for wisdom, and valued the merchandise of it above gold or rubies. She offered the best of her land to king Solomon, doing all she could to beautify the house of God's glory. She considered nothing that she had too good for him.

O the blessedness of all this within and abroad! Glory abroad, leaving its memorial everywhere and the beauty of the Spirit's mind within, ordering the whole conversation of the soul! Such scenes may be realized to the enjoyment of our hearts and eyes now, and to the glory of our Lord in the days of the kingdom!

It is well that now grace divides the scene with nature's misery and defilement, and it is well that then glory will know nothing but its own creation, for light and its principles will be triumphant. The light which God has brought in shines, it is most true, but shines in a dark place; the light that He will yet bring in will be light everywhere, the day-dawn around, and the day-star within (2 Pet. 1:19). It is now the valley of Baca with wells of water; soon it will be the courts of unbroken, undivided praise (Psalm 84).

"The Lord will give grace and glory."

Grace With Salt

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Col. 4:6.

Our words should be "always with grace," and prove themselves such by ministering good to the souls of others-"grace unto the hearers." This, however, will often be in the pungency of admonition or rebuke, and at times with severity or decision, or even with indignation and zeal. In this character they will be "seasoned with salt." And having these fine qualities, being thus gracious and yet salted, they will be such as will bear their own virtues, that we have known how to answer every man.

The Lord Jesus, above all others, illustrated this form of moral perfection. He knew how to answer every man with words which always were with grace for the soul's profit, but at times seasoned, or seasoned highly, with salt.

In answering inquiries He did not so much aim at satisfying them, as at reaching the conscience or the condition of those who presented them.

In His silence, as well as in His words, when He had to stand before the Jew or the Gentile at the last, before the priests, or Pilate, or Herod, we can trace full moral beauty and perfection, witnessing that at least One among the sons of men knew "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak."

Great variety in His style presents itself to us in all this. Sometimes He is gentle, sometimes peremptory, sometimes He reasons, sometimes He rebukes at once, and sometimes conducts calm reasoning to the point of solemn condemnation and judgment.

He knows the moral workings of everyone before Him. By Him actions are "weighed" in their value as before God, and His words as well as His doings answer them accordingly.

Matthew 15 is one chapter in which this perfection is wonderfully displayed. In the course of the action there, the Lord is called to answer Pharisees, the multitude, Peter, the Syrophenician, and the disciples in their mistakes and stupidity and selfishness; His tone of rebuke and of reasoning, of calm, patient teaching, of deep, wise and gracious training of the soul, are all precious and admirable in their place and occasion.

Is there not also a comeliness in its being said of the Lord in Luke 2, not that He was teaching or learning, but that He was hearing and asking questions? To have taught would not have been in season, a child as He was in the midst of His elders; to have learned would not have been in full fidelity to the light, the eminent and brighter light which He knew He carried in Himself, for He was wiser than His teachers, and had more understanding than the ancients (Psalm 119:99, 100). Here again we get the grace of which that scripture- "Let your speech be always with grace"-speaks. For of this same Child who was in the temple with the doctors of law, we read that He was "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." He knew how to

use the fullness of wisdom that was in Him in perfection of grace, and He is, therefore, not presented to us as either teaching or learning.

And so, in this area of our lives, our speech, may we learn to be more conformed to our perfect Example, the man Christ Jesus.

He Giveth More Grace

"He giveth more grace."

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

Hearing Ear and Open Heart

"In my meditations of late, I have been somewhat occupied with four things that, it seems to me, the believer needs in his daily walk before the Lord. The first of these is a "hearing ear," to listen to what God has to say through His Word. Second, an "open heart" to receive it by faith as from Himself. Then a "tender conscience" to apply it to self. And finally a "willing spirit" to seek by His grace to walk in the good of it."

A Heart for Christ

Read Matt. 26

In this solemn chapter, we have a great many hearts revealed: the hearts of the chief priests, the hearts of the elders, the hearts of the scribes, the heart of Peter, and the heart of Judas. But there is one heart in particular unlike all the others, and that is the heart of the woman who brought the alabaster box of very precious ointment to anoint the body of Jesus. This woman had a heart for Christ. She may have been a very great sinner—a very ignorant sinner—but her eyes had been opened to see a beauty in Jesus which led her to judge that nothing was too costly to be spent on Him.

Passing over the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, let us look for a moment at the heart of this woman in contrast with the heart of Judas and the heart of Peter.

1. Judas was a covetous man. He loved money, a very common love in every age. He had preached the gospel. He had walked in company with the Lord Jesus during the days of His public ministry. He had heard His words, seen His ways and experienced His kindness. However, though he was an apostle, a companion of Jesus, and a preacher of the gospel, he had no heart for Christ. He had a heart for money. His heart was always moved by the thought of gain. The depths of his being were stirred by money. "The bag" was his nearest and dearest object. Satan knew the special lust of Judas. He was fully aware of the price at which he could be bought. He understood how to tempt him, and knew how to use him. Solemn thought!

Notice also that the very position of Judas made him all the more fit for Satan. His acquaintance with the ways of Christ made him a fit person to betray Him into the hands of His enemies. Head knowledge of sacred things, if the heart be not touched, renders a man more terribly callous, profane, and wicked. The chief priests and scribes in Matthew 2 had a head knowledge of the Scripture, but no heart for Christ. They could at once reach for the prophetic roll and find the place where it was written: "Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel." Matt. 2:6. All this was very well, very true, and very beautiful, but they had no heart for this "Governor;" they did not want Him. They had Scripture at their fingertips. They would have felt ashamed, no doubt, had they not been able to answer Herod's question. It would have been a disgrace to men in their position to exhibit ignorance, but they had no heart for Christ. Hence they laid their scriptural knowledge at the feet of an ungodly king who was about to use it, if he could, for the purpose of slaying the true heir to the throne. So much for head knowledge without heart love.

We would not, however, underestimate scriptural knowledge. Far from it. The true knowledge of Scripture must lead the heart to Jesus. But there is such a thing as knowing the letter of Scripture so as to be able to repeat chapter after chapter, verse after verse, even to be a sort of a walking concordance, and still the heart can be cold and callous toward Christ. This knowledge will only throw one more into the hands of Satan, as in the case of the chief priests and scribes. Herod

would not [lave applied to ignorant men for information. The devil seldom takes up ignorant men, or stupid men, to act against the truth of God. No; he finds agents more fit to do his work. The learned, the intellectual, the deep-thinking, provided they have no heart for Christ, will serve him well at all times. What was it that drew the wise men from the east? Why could not Herod-why could not Satan-enlist them into his service? They had a heart for Christ. Blessed safeguard! Doubtless they were ignorant of Scripture. They would have made only a poor hand of searching for a passage in the prophets, but they were looking for Jesus-earnestly, honestly, diligently looking for Jesus. Herod would have made use of them if he could, but they were not to be used by him. They found their way to Jesus. They did not know much about the prophet who had spoken of the "Governor," but they found their way to the "Governor" Himself. They found Him in the Person of the Babe in the manger at Bethlehem, and instead of being tools in the hands of Herod, they were worshipers at the feet of Jesus.

We would not commend ignorance of the Scriptures-by no means. People who do not know the Scriptures are sure to err greatly. It was to the praise of Timothy that the Apostle could say to him: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation;" then he adds, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:15. The true knowledge of Scripture will always conduct us to the feet of Jesus, but mere head knowledge of Scripture, without heart love for Christ, will only make us more effective agents in the hands of Satan.

Thus, in the case of the hard-hearted, money-loving Judas, he had knowledge without any affection for Christ, and his very familiarity with that blessed One made him a suitable instrument for the devil. His nearness to Jesus enabled him to be a traitor. The devil knew that thirty pieces of silver could purchase his service in the horrible work of betraying his Master.

Think of it! Here was an apostle, a preacher of the gospel, and yet, underneath the cloak of profession, lay a heart exercised in covetous practices-a heart which had a wide place for "thirty pieces of silver," but not a corner for Jesus. What a warning! Think of the heart, course and character of Judas; consider his end. He preached the gospel, but he never knew it, never believed it, never felt it. He had plenty of heart for money, but no heart for Christ. As "the son of perdition," he "hanged himself," and "went to his own place." Professing Christians, beware of head knowledge, lip profession, official piety, and mechanical religion-just seek to have a heart for Christ.

2. In Peter we have a warning of a different kind. He really loved Jesus, but he feared the cross. He shrank from confessing His name in the midst of the enemy's ranks. He boasted of what he would do, when he should have been self-empty. He was fast asleep when he ought to have been on his knees. Instead of praying, he was sleeping, and then, instead of being still, he was drawing his sword. He followed Jesus "afar off," and then warmed himself at the high priest's fire. Finally, he cursed and swore that he did not know his gracious Master. All this was terrible! Who could suppose that the Peter of Matt. 16:16 is the Peter of Matthew 26? Yet so it is. The highest position, the loudest profession, may all end in following Jesus afar off, and basely denying His name.

Peter would have spurned the thought of selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and yet he was afraid to confess Him before a servant maid. He did not betray Him to His enemies, but He denied Him before them.

Remember Peter's fall, and beware of self-confidence. Cultivate a prayerful spirit. Keep close to Jesus, and away from the influence of this world's favor. "Keep thyself pure." Be earnest and watchful, occupied with Christ. This is the true safeguard. Do not be satisfied with the mere avoidance of open sin. Do not rest in mere blamelessness of conduct and character. Cherish lively, warm affections toward Christ. One who follows Jesus "afar off" may deny Him before long. Let us think of this. Let us profit by the case of Peter. He himself afterward tells us to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith. 1 Pet. 5:8, 9. These are weighty words, coming, as they do, from the Holy Ghost, through the pen of one who had suffered so much from lack of vigilance.

Blessed be the grace that could say to Peter, before his fall, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Notice that He does not say, "I have prayed for thee, that thou mayest not fall." No, but "that thy faith fail not when thou hast fallen. Precious, matchless grace! This was Peter's resource. He was a debtor to grace from first to last.

3. The woman with the alabaster box stands forth in bright and beautiful contrast to all of this. While the chief priests, elders, and scribes were plotting against Christ "in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas," she was anointing His body "in the house of Simon the leper." She was wholly absorbed with her object, and her object was Christ. Those who did not know His worth and beauty might pronounce her sacrifice a waste. He who could sell Him for thirty pieces of silver, might talk of giving "to the poor," but she paid no attention. She had found her all in Christ. The disciples might murmur, but she could worship and adore. Jesus was more to her than all the poor in the world. She felt that nothing was "waste" that was spent on Him. Happy woman! May we imitate her! May we ever find our place at the feet of Jesus, loving, adoring, admiring, and worshipping His blessed Person!

May the Lord grant us each a heart for Christ.

Jehovah's Demand and Satan's Objections: a Word to Parents

"Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness. Exod. 5:1.

What a volume of truth is contained in this sentence. It sets forth in plain and forcible language the blessed purpose of the Lord God of Israel to have His people completely delivered from Egypt and separated unto Himself in order that they might feast with Him in the wilderness. Nothing could satisfy His heart, but their entire emancipation from the land of death and darkness. He would free them not only from Egypt's brick-kilns and taskmasters, but from its temples and altars, from all its habits and associations, and from its principles, maxims, and fashions. In fact, they must be a thoroughly separated people before they could hold a feast to Him in the wilderness.

So it was with Israel, and so it is with us. We, too, must be a fully and consciously delivered people before we can worship and serve God properly. The world is to the Christian what Egypt was to Israel; only, of course, our separation from the world is not local or physical, but moral and spiritual. Israel left Egypt in person; we leave the world in spirit and in principle. Israel left Egypt in fact; we leave the world in faith. It was a real and thorough separation for them, and it is the same for us. "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness." To this rigid separation, Satan had and still has many objections.

1) His first objection was set forth in the words spoken by the lips of Pharaoh, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. chap. 8:25. These were subtle words-words well calculated to ensnare a heart that was not in communion with the mind of God. It might (with great plausibility and apparent force) be argued, Is it not liberal on the part of the king of Egypt to offer to tolerate your peculiar mode of worship? Why not take common ground with your neighbors?

This might seem very reasonable, but notice Jehovah's high and holy standard! Listen to the plain and positive declaration, "Let My people go." There is no mistaking this.

There is something uncommonly fine in Moses's reply to Satan's first objection: "It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as He shall command us." Exod. 8:26, 27.

There would have been a lack of moral fitness in sacrificing to Jehovah the objects of Egyptian worship. But, more than this, Egypt was not the place in which to erect an altar to the true God. Abraham had no altar when he turned aside into Egypt. He abandoned his worship and his stranger ship when he entered that land, and if Abraham could not worship there, neither could his seed.

Beloved, "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." The motives which activate and the objects which animate the true believer lie far beyond the world's range of vision, and we may well understand that in the proportion in which the world can enter into and appreciate a

Christian's motives, must the Christian be unfaithful to his Lord.

We speak, of course, of proper Christian motives. No doubt there is much in a Christian's life that the world can admire and value: integrity, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, care for the poor, self-denial. All these things may be understood and appreciated, but, admitting all this, we return with deeper emphasis to the apostolic statement that "The world knoweth us not," and if we want to walk with God-if we would hold a feast unto Him-if it is our heart's true and earnest desire to run a consistently heavenly course, we must break with the world altogether.

2) Satan's second objection is very much like his first. If he cannot succeed in keeping Israel in Egypt, he will at least try to keep them as near to it as possible. "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away." chap. 8:28.

There is more damage done to the cause of Christ by an apparent, partial, half-hearted giving up of the world, than by remaining in it altogether. Wavering, half-and-half professors injure the testimony and dishonor the Lord far more than thorough out-and-out worldlings. And, there is a wide difference between giving up certain worldly things, and giving up the world itself. We may lop off some of the branches, and yet cling with greater tenacity to the old trunk.

We must carefully see to this. We feel persuaded that what hundreds of professing Christians need is to make a clean break with the world. It is utterly impossible to make a proper start, much less to make any progress, while the heart is playing fast and loose with the holy claims of Christ.

One of Satan's masterpieces is to lead Christians to rest satisfied with looking to the cross for salvation while remaining in the world, or occupying a border position-not going "very far away." This is a terrible snare, against which we must solemnly warn one another. Every believer should be devoted to and walk in fellowship with a rejected and glorified Christ. To walk with Christ and to delight in Him, we must be apart from this godless, Christless, wicked world- apart from it in the spirit of our minds and in the affections of our hearts.

Here, however, we may be asked, Is Christianity merely a stripping, an emptying, a giving up? Does it only consist of prohibition and negation? We answer with hearty emphasis, NO! Christianity is preeminently positive-divinely satisfying. What does it give us in lieu of what it takes from us? It gives us "unsearchable riches" in place of "dung" and "dross." It gives us "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," instead of a poor, passing bubble on the stream of time. It gives us Christ, the joy of the heart of God-the Object of heaven's worship-the eternal sunlight of the new creation-in lieu of a few moments of sinful gratification and guilty pleasure. And finally, it gives us the eternal sunlight of the eternity of ineffable bliss and glory in the Father's house above, instead of an eternity in the awful flames of hell.

Men do not find it very hard to give up cinders for diamonds, ashes for pearls, and dross for gold. In the same way, when one has tasted the preciousness of Christ, there is no difficulty in giving up the world; no, the difficulty would be to remain in it. If Christ fills the heart, the world is not only driven out, but kept out. We not only turn our backs upon Egypt, but we go far enough away from it never to return. And for what? To do nothing? To have nothing? No, but to "hold a feast" to the Lord. True, it is "in the wilderness," but then the wilderness is heaven begun when we have Christ there with us.

We have already considered two of Satan's objections, and we shall now proceed to the third.

3) "And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the Lord your God: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord. And he said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so; go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence." Exod. 10:8-11.

These words contain a very solemn lesson for the hearts of all Christian parents. They reveal a deep and crafty purpose of/the arch-enemy. If he cannot keep the parents in Egypt, he will at least seek to keep the children, and in this way mar the testimony to the truth of God, tarnish His glory in His people, and hinder their blessing in Him. Parents in the wilderness and their children in Egypt would be a terrible anomaly—a thing wholly opposed to the mind of God, and utterly subversive of His glory in the walk of His people.

"Thou and... thy house" is a phrase of deep practical import. It involves the very highest consequences, and conveys the richest consolation to every Christian parent, and we may truly add, the neglect of it has led to the most disastrous consequences in thousands of family circles.

What is involved in the weighty expression, "Thou and... thy house"? There are two things involved in it. In the first place there is a most precious privilege, and in the second place, a holy responsibility. It is unquestionably the privilege of all Christian parents to count on God for their children, but it also their duty—do we dislike the homely word?—to train their children for God. We are to begin at the very beginning and go steadily on from day to day, month to month, year to year, training our children for God. Just as a wise and skillful gardener begins, while his fruit trees are young and tender, to train the branches along the wall where they may catch the warm rays of the sun, so should we, while our children are young and impressionable, seek to mold them for God. It would be the height of folly on the part of the gardener to wait till the branches become old and gnarled, and then seek to train them. He would find it a hopeless task. And most surely it is the very loftiest height of folly on our part to allow our children to remain for years and years under the molding hand of Satan, the world and sin before we rouse ourselves to the holy business of molding them for God.

Let us not be misunderstood. Let no one suppose that we mean to teach that grace is hereditary, or that we can by any act or system of training make Christians of our children. Nothing is further from our thoughts. Grace is sovereign, and the children of Christian parents must, like all others, be born of water and of the Spirit ere they can see or enter the kingdom of God. All this is as plain and as clear as Scripture can make it, but, on the other hand, Scripture is equally clear and plain as to the duty of Christian parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And what does this bringing up involve? One thing is certain, namely, that Christian training means a great deal more than drilling our children in religion, teaching them to repeat texts and hymns like a parrot, and turning the family circle into a school. It is good to store the memory of a child with Scripture and sweet hymns. No one would think of calling this in question. But also, it is very important to surround our children with a thoroughly Christian atmosphere from their earliest moments, to let them breathe the pure air of the new creation, and to let them see in their parents

the genuine fruits of spiritual life—love, peace, purity, tenderness, genuine kindness, unselfishness, loving thoughtfulness of others. These things have a mighty moral influence upon the impressionable mind of a child.

On the other hand, who can attempt to define the pernicious effect produced upon our children by our inconsistencies, our bad temper, our selfish ways, our worldliness, and covetousness? Can we be said to bring our children out of Egypt when Egypt's principles and habits are seen in our whole career? We may use and teach the phraseology of the wilderness or of Canaan, but if our ways, our manners, and our habits are those of Egypt, our children are quick to mark the gross inconsistency and the effect upon them is deplorable. The unfaithfulness of Christian parents has contributed to swell the tide of infidelity which is rising around us with such appalling rapidity.

There is a great deal more involved in child training than many of us realize. Only by the power of the Spirit of God can parents be fitted for the great and holy work of training their children in this present day. That word, "My grace is sufficient for thee," falls upon the heart with heavenly sweetness and power. We can, with fullest confidence, reckon upon God to bless the very feeblest effort to lead our dear children forth out of Egypt. But the effort must be made, and made, too, with real, fixed, earnest purpose of heart.

We have to remember that the foundation of character is laid in the nursery. Christian training begins in the early days of infancy, and it must be steadily pursued from day to day, month to month, and year to year, in simple, hearty dependence upon God who will, most assuredly, in due time, hear and answer the earnest cry of a parent's heart and crown with His rich blessing the faithful labors of a parent's hands.

We would in true brotherly love offer a suggestion to all Christian parents as to the immense importance of inculcating a spirit of implicit obedience. Are we then to be continually chucking the reins and brandishing the rod? By no means. This would be to break the spirit of the child instead of subduing his will. Where parental authority is thoroughly established the reins may lie gently on the neck, and the rod may be allowed to stand in the corner. There is no need whatever to be continually asserting our authority. There is a quiet dignity about one who really possesses authority, whereas the spasmodic efforts of weakness only draw out contempt.

4) We close with the briefest possible reference to the enemy's fourth and last objection which is embodied in the words, "And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." chap. 10:24. He would let them go, but without resources to serve the Lord. If he could not keep them in Egypt, he would send them away crippled and shorn. Such is the enemy's last objection.

Notice the noble reply of a devoted heart. It is morally grand. "And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and" [ponder these suggestive words] "we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither." chap. 10:25, 26.

We must be fully and clearly on God's ground before we can form any true idea of the nature and extent of His claims. It is utterly impossible while surrounded by a worldly atmosphere and governed by a worldly spirit, worldly principles, and worldly objects, to have any just sense of what

is due to God. We must stand on the lofty ground of accomplished redemption, apart from this present evil world, before we can properly serve Christ.

Moses, the man of God, meets all Satan's objectives by a simple but decided adherence to Jehovah's demand, "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness."

This is the true principle, the true method, the true course, at all times and under all circumstances. The divine standard must be maintained in all its integrity, at all cost, and in spite of all objections. If the standard be lowered the breadth of a hair, the enemy gains his point, and Christian service and testimony are wholly out of the question.

Jesus the Son of God

God had spoken by prophets. At different times and in many ways, one prophet after another, according to his measure, had testified of the coming of the sinless and guileless Redeemer. The woman's seed, the prophet which Jehovah would raise up like unto Moses, the Child born and Son spoken of by Isaiah, the suffering and reigning One spoken of by David, and other holy men of God pointed to Him in whom God would be well pleased.

When the time came that the Word should become flesh and dwell among us, His coming into the world was triumphantly announced by a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The Holy Ghost, who until then had been speaking of Him in types and other ways by prophets, now revealed to Simeon that this was "the Lord's Christ," so that in Him he saw God's salvation. Others, who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, also spoke of Him, and were filled with praise and thanksgiving to God. After thirty years of trial in this world, like a grain of wheat alone, when even His brethren did not believe on Him, we find that the heaven was opened over Him, the Holy Ghost came down in a bodily shape and abode upon Him, and the Father declared concerning Him, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." Luke 3:21, 22. Thus, as the Son of man He was sealed because of His own personal and moral perfections (John 6:27). Here we have perfection indeed, both human and divine.

It had been revealed to John the Baptist that the One upon whom he should "see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him," was not only the Lamb of God, but the Son of God, and the One who "baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." John 1:33. What glory we have presented to us here! Who but a divine person could baptize with the Holy Ghost? Who but One who was man-perfect man- could be God's Lamb, a sacrifice for sin, suited to God? Who could this mysterious One be but "the Son of God"? What adoring and praising hearts we should have as we contemplate this perfect One- divinely perfect, perfect man, personally perfect, morally perfect. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Though "in the likeness of sinful flesh," those taught of the Spirit could discern glory in Him which was infinitely beyond anything of created glory, and could only describe what they saw in such words as, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1, 14, 33, 34. May we reverently and with worshiping hearts ponder a little further God's word concerning Him.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, where those addressed were enjoined to "go on unto perfection," we find the deity of the Son announced in the very opening verses, for, without doubt, it is the glory and perfection of His Person that gives such eternal value and efficacy to what He did on the cross, as well as to all the offices He now sustains. Not only is the Son here set forth as the One by whom the universe was made, and the upholder of everything, but as the One who after sitting on His own throne and reigning as Israel's king will fold up this old creation as a vesture; yet He Himself is the same and His years shall not fail.

It is God who has spoken in the Person of His Son (Heb. 1:1). He had spoken in the prophets, having used their mouths to speak and their hands to write, so that the instrument so employed could truthfully say, "Thus saith the Lord," or, "The word of the Lord hath come unto me, saying," etc. Holy, men of God had spoken "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Father, too, had spoken and given testimony from heaven to the personal perfections of the Son of man on this earth, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." And again we read, "For Him hath God the Father sealed." It was God who spoke through the prophets by the Holy Ghost; it was God the Father who gave testimony to the Person of the Son. But in these last days God has spoken to us in the person of the Son. It is the Son who declared the Father, the Son by whom all things were created, the Heir of all things, the Upholder of all things, who did by Himself purge our sins. He was so above created things that He could truly call God Father, and the Father could own Him as His only begotten Son. It is the Son who is now seated on the Father's throne, and crowned with glory and honor; the Son of whom it will be said, when He comes into the world as the first begotten, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Again, it is the Son of whom it can be truly said, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom." It is the Son concerning whom, when speaking of the created heaven and earth, it is said, "They shall perish, but Thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." These surely are nothing less than varied glories of the perfection and deity of the Son.

In the Son, God was manifested in the flesh. Though He was the Son eternally in the bosom of the Father and before the universe was formed was the central Object of divine counsels and grace toward man according to eternal purpose, yet He was also the Son in incarnation as born of Mary, according as it was said to her by the angel Gabriel, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35. This fulfills also the prophecy of Psalm 2, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." And again He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. 1:4. He now sits on the Father's throne as righteously exalted above all creatures, and expecting to come forth to judge, for to which of the angels said He at any time, "Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool"?

Until the fullness of time came when God sent forth His Son, God had been revealed as God who created, as the Lord God who was in relationship with man, as the Almighty who could do everything and from whom no thought could be withholden, as Jehovah in covenant relationship with Israel. The Father, however, had not been revealed. In John 1:18 we read, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." In this way the Father was made known; the Father was seen in the Son. The words He uttered were of the Father; He said, "The Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." John 12:49. Again, the Son said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.... Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." John 14:9-11. Thus, while the Son was so truly one in divine essence with the Father that He could say, "I and My Father are one," yet there was such distinction of persons between the Father and the Son that the Father sent and commanded, and the Son came and obeyed. Moreover, He could speak of

leaving the world and going to the Father, of finishing the work the Father gave Him to do, of glorifying the Father on the earth, and of obeying the commandment of the Father in laying down His life for the sheep. We can therefore praise God with our whole heart that the Son came and declared the Father as none else could.

We have thus the revelation of God-Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We have seen how God the Father has testified of the perfection of the Son, and we know that God the Holy Ghost is the testifier and the glorifier of the Son. But in these last days God the Son has spoken to us of God the Father, and has assured us who, through grace, have believed that the Father Himself has revealed the Son to us, drawn us to Him, brought us into the everlasting relationship of children, that He loves us as He loves the Son, purposes to conform us to the image of His Son, to the praise of His glory, and would have us now know it and enjoy it. When we ponder the words of the Son, let us never forget that it is that Person speaking who is the Son. As another has forcibly put it, "It is God Himself who speaks, not by another, not as the Father nor in the Person of the Father, not merely by the Holy Ghost using a person not divine, but as Himself a divine Person and that Person the Son."

It is no marvel that God speaks of the Son as the brightness or effulgence of His glory, the express image of His Person, or rather an exact expression of His substance or essential being. Such surely He was and is; "for in Him all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell." Col. 1:19 J.N.D. Trans. And, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9. It is the infinite perfection of the Person of the Son we have here. So that as the Son, He is the raiser of the dead, and life giver, and all judgment is committed unto Him, which only a divine person could carry out. "What things soever He [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.... For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him." John 5:19-23. He therefore "knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man." John 2:24, 25. And yet He delighted to tell out the love of God to the world in giving "His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

The Son, divinely perfect, and perfect as man- personally perfect-without a taint or a flaw, was morally the expression of the glory of God. Not only was He apart from sin, but in His every step and every word was perfect obedience, love and faith. He always did the will of Him that sent Him, and it was His meat to do so. He never uttered a word which needed correction, nor took a step He had to retrace. He was inwardly pure, so that He could say, "Thy law is within My heart," and outwardly "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." How truly we can say, when considering the pathway of the Son on earth-

"Thy name encircles every grace

That God as man could show;

There only could He fully trace

A life divine below."

With the unutterable agony and shame of the cross immediately before Him, He could challenge His bitterest enemies with "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Devils spoke of Him as "the Holy One of God." Luke 4:34. Pilate took water and washed his hands before the multitude saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person; see ye to it." Judas also, His betrayer, brought the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." The Roman officers exclaimed, "Never man spake like this man." The centurion glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man." The thief hanging by His side gave his testimony saying, "We receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss." The perfect One, to whom angels had ministered, had only to ask His Father and He would presently have given Him more than twelve legions of angels, but He added-for He came for the suffering of death- "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" But above all the testimony of these men was the Father's voice from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." At the last He is raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, and set on His right hand in righteousness. He is there, having so glorified God in life and death as to merit the glory of God-the glory into which, as the crucified, risen, and ascended Son of man He entered. Language fails to give utterance to the personal, moral, and official glories of this perfect One. Well might an apostle exhort those who were dwelling on rudimentary truth and typical things to "go on unto perfection."

The Lord's Supper: a Memorial of Christ

The Lord's supper is to be eaten as a memorial, or remembrance, of Christ. This is His own interpretation of it. The bread was symbolically His body, the cup His blood, accomplishing the remission of sins. To eat and to drink of this feast was to express participation in the virtues of His sacrifice (1 Cor. 10:18), and it was thus eaten in remembrance of Christ, in token of the soul's fellowship with what His sacrifice had accomplished for sinners. It was therefore to be eaten simply with thanksgiving. The remembrance of what the sacrifice of Christ had accomplished would properly be accompanied with nothing else. No supplication would be needed, because it is a finished work. The table records a full remission.

To pray for the forgiveness of sins would be discordant with the atmosphere of the table. It might be quite unintended, yet really a reproach upon the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. It would be building again the things which Christ had destroyed, and, in the language and sense of Galatians 2, making Him the minister of sin, making His blood like the blood of bulls and goats, only the remembrance and not the remission of sins.

But to surround the table with thanksgiving, to there praise Him for redemption, this would be realizing the work of the Lamb of God which the feast sets forth; and, accordingly, it is always as thus accomplished that the Scripture presents it to us. Jesus, on taking the bread and the cup, gave thanks (Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22). He did nothing else.

The Lord's blessing and giving thanks are, to all moral intents, in the same sense, and in the like mind as the Apostle who calls it the cup of blessing, which we bless-the cup at the taking of which we bless or speak well of the Lord-because by that cup, or by the death and blood-shedding of Jesus which it sets forth, He has rightly entitled Himself to praise, or to hear Himself well spoken of. Again, Paul speaking of it says that when the Lord parted the bread and cup among His disciples, He simply gave thanks (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

It may be accompanied with the confession of sin, because it implies our utter death in trespasses and sins, and therefore that would not be in discordance with the supper.

But still we do not find this attended to in any of the passages that refer to the supper, but in them it takes the simple form of a season of thanksgiving for the remission of sins. It tells us, not like the blood of bulls and goats, that sin is remembered, but that it is remitted. This is its peculiar characteristic tone. To give thanks in company with it is harmony; to pray about our sin is discordant.

The service of self-judgment or self-examination, however, may well precede this feast, because we are by the remission of our sins called to holiness, just as of old the feast of unleavened bread accompanied the Passover. And as the Israelites celebrated the redemption from Egypt, they also searched the house for leaven (always used in Scripture as a type of evil) that they might put away all that offended Him who had redeemed them. This is most fitting, and indeed without this, the Passover was not kept.

So with us, if we do not walk in a self-judging spirit, we do not discern the Lord's body; in other words, I believe we do not keep the feast of the Lord aright if we are not honestly and holly searching for and removing all that would grieve the Lord (1 Cor. 5; 6).

This is in as full harmony with the table as thanksgiving is, and the cleansing out of the leaven should be done both from the congregation (1 Cor. 5) and from our individual selves (1 Cor. 11:28). For we are one in our standing, an unleavened lump, and so should we be in our desires and diligence of soul, for the Lord's supper shows forth the Lord's death till He come.

The death of Jesus had this twofold sense: it published remission of sins and all God's hatred of sin and it released the sinner and condemned the sin. The Lord's supper eaten, both with thanksgiving and in the spirit of self-judgment, will be in accordance with this.

It is to be a Passover in truth, with a feast of unleavened bread, and therefore there is to be the expression of conscious redemption from Egypt, the place of death and scene of judgment; this is thanksgiving. Such I believe to be the simple character which the Scripture puts on the supper of the Lord.

Human religiousness has attached many and various additions to it, but the Word of God reproveth them.

There is no warrant for consecrating the elements or separating them by process to the service of the Lord's table.

The bread and the wine are laid on the table as bread and wine, broken and poured out to represent the broken body and blood of Jesus; no form or process is needful, however, to give them title to lie on the table for this use.

Neither, do I judge, have we warrant for asking God to bless us in the observing of this service, simply because it is our worship, or setting forth of His praise, rather than a waiting upon Him for some benefit to ourselves, either in soul or body. We bless Him in this act, rather than ask Him to bless us; we speak good of His name in it by setting forth the memorial of what He has done, and do not supplicate Him to bless us or to speak good to us by conferring some fresh favor upon us.

I believe, if the Word of God were very simply attended to in this matter, this beautiful service would be relieved of much that religiously encumbers it, and the table would give forth no uncertain sound.

Supplication about it, moreover, is utterly discordant with the service of this table; confession of sin might be made, but there would be no felt need of it on a collective basis; consecration of the elements would be altogether refused; seeking a blessing would not be thought of by the worshippers, but our blessing Him because we are blessed.

These common things would be laid aside, and the service would be an act of worship, giving the Lord the honor due unto His name in this age, until He comes again to gather fresh homage from the lips of His countless redeemed ones.

It is this service or worship primarily that ought to gather us to His name every first, or resurrection, day; afterward things may be there given us of the Lord, such as the word of exhortation or of

teaching, or the voice and spirit of supplication.

But first and foremost, we should assemble at the Lord's table (which publishes through the riches of His grace the remission of our sins) to praise Him.

This is entering His house, duly entering it, with praise, because He has already blessed us; it is entering it in the spirit of conscious victory over our enemies, tearing asunder all bonds, and silencing every tongue that would charge or condemn us.

It would be entering His house in a way worthy of that house, where mercy has rejoiced against judgment, where the sword of the destroying angel has been gloriously stayed and where, therefore, the spirit of the worshipper says as he enters, "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." Psalm 27:5, 6.

May His courts be thus entered in spirit now, for the bread and cup are there, and the veil is gone.

A Mariner

How much the Christian resembles the mariner in a wide expanse of ocean. All his bearings have to be taken from the heavens. The earth is out of sight, and there is no beaten path for him in the sea; so the mariner is entirely dependent on seeing the position of the heavenly bodies-mainly, the sun. The Christian, since the things of the world cannot guide him, takes his bearings here on earth entirely from Christ's position there in heaven, and steers his course accordingly. He goes on with the knowledge that Christ was rejected here, and yet he goes forward fearlessly because the same Christ who died for him has been received up into glory, and lives for him at the Father's right hand. So he keeps the world at his back, and a glorified Savior before him.

Many have made shipwreck because they have not steered in this way; many have even gone on without taking their bearings at all. It is good when it can be said of us, "The Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Deut. 32:12. When the Lord alone leads, there is nothing to becloud our vision, or to distort our judgments by grieving the Spirit of God.

Natural Cause and Effect: the Common Sense View

By Abraham's listening to his wife, who had not believed God as he had, he was brought down to her level, the old level of natural cause and effect (Gen. 16). According to nature, Abraham's belief was folly. So it appeared to Sarah.

Accordingly, she took the common sense view of the matter, and said the thing must be brought about by natural means. However, the purposes of God are not wrought out in this way, nor does the man of faith live the life appointed for him in this manner.

The result of natural cause is natural effect; the bondwoman produced a son who by nature was not, and could never be, the son of promise. He lived and became the father of a race always at enmity with the seed of promise. This is God's way of pointing out that the just must live by faith.

It is no use attempting to bring God's purposes to pass by our own wills, in our own time and by natural means. The only result will be a crop of thorns and many bitter reflections. Still God will use even our crop of thorns to His own ends and our blessing. His government is one of grace.

The Nature and Pathway of the Lord Jesus

In all things Jesus is perfect. He manifested this when, knowing all things, He came down into a scene where He tasted rejection at every step- rejection not merely as a baby when He was carried into Egypt, but rejection all through a life of the most blameless yet divinely ordered obscurity. His ministry while on earth excited growing hatred on man's part. There is nothing a man dreads more than to be nothing at all. Even to be spoken against is not so dreadful to the proud spirit of man as to be absolutely unnoticed, and yet the greater part of the life of Jesus was spent in entire obscurity. We only have a single incident recorded of Jesus from His earliest years until He emerges for the ministry of the Word of God and the gospel of the kingdom. But then He lived in Nazareth, proverbially the lowest place of poor, despised Galilee-so much so that even a godly Galilean wondered if any good thing could come out of Nazareth.

When Jesus did enter into His public service, He met opposition, though at first there was a welcome which would have gratified most men. But He the Son, the divine Person who was pleased to serve in this world, saw through that which would have been sweet to others when men, astonished and attracted, hung on the gracious words that fell from His lips. This attraction, however, did not last, for the same day in which men heard words as had never fallen on the ears of man, they could not endure the grace of God, and had they been left to themselves they would have cast Him down headlong from the precipice outside their city (Luke 4:29). Such was man and such he still is. But Jesus accepted a ministry of which He knew from the first the character, course, and results. He knew that the more divine grace and truth were brought out by Him, the more violent the rejection He would meet among men.

The Book of Nehemiah

In beginning an exposition of the book of Nehemiah, a few brief remarks may be permitted by way of introduction to its study. Scarcely thirteen years had passed since Ezra had gone up to Jerusalem, armed with royal authority and impelled by his godly zeal for the glory of Jehovah in the welfare of His people, "to teach in Israel statutes and judgments;" to seek, in a word, to reestablish over the people the authority of the law. And now in His grace and tender mercy God prepared another vessel of blessing for His beloved people. This fact illustrates in a striking manner a divine principle. It might have been thought that Ezra would be sufficient for the work, but, as is so often seen in the history of God's ways in government, a servant who is suited to one state of the people may be altogether unadapted for another, and even be a hindrance to the work of God if he continue to occupy his position or assert his claims to leadership. How often has this been seen even in the assembly!

Ezra's gift was that of a teacher or pastor, a gift of a very high order, but he evidently was not suited to direct the work of building the wall. It required that of a ruler, and Nehemiah's position under the king had developed in him the qualities to make him a suitable servant to carry out this important work. He was a devoted man, habitually turning to God in all his difficulties- this was the source of all his strength. But it can easily be seen that Ezra walked on a higher level than his successor. (Compare Ezra 8:21-23 with Neh. 2:7-9; Ezra 9:3 with Neh. 13:25.) Yet, though Ezra was still at Jerusalem, it was Nehemiah who was sent at this special moment. It is lovely when the servant receives his work from the hands of the Lord, and, discerning when his mission for any particular purpose is ended, can retire.

In the book of Nehemiah, as well as in that of Ezra, it will be observed that God is ever watching over His people, and sustaining them by the successive interventions of His grace. First He sent Ezra, and afterward, Nehemiah, to revive His work and to effect the restoration of His people. But as in the book of Judges, so it is at this period, and as it ever has been in the experience of the Church that every successive revival, when the energy that produced it has died away, has left the people in a lower, a worse state than before. The reason is evident. The need for a revival springs from the fact of increasing corruption and decay. By the revival, the downward tendency is for the moment checked or arrested, and hence the moment the force which came into conflict with the evil is expended, the corrupt stream sweeps onward with increased power and volume. Such is man; and such is the patient God of all grace that, in spite of the unfaithfulness and even apostasy of His people, He unweariedly continues to busy Himself with their interests and blessing.

As to the character of the book itself, we may quote the words of another. He says, "In Nehemiah we witness the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the restoration of what may be termed the civil condition of the people, but under circumstances that definitely prove, their subjection to the Gentiles." This will be unfolded to us as we pursue our consideration of the book.

CHAPTER 1

The book opens with a brief narrative of the circumstances which God used to touch the heart of Nehemiah by the condition of His people, and to produce that exercise of soul in His presence which resulted, by the ordering and purpose of God, in his mission to Jerusalem. First, giving the date and the place of the occurrence, Nehemiah says, "It came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace," etc. The first verse of chapter 2 shows that this was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes; that is, as already noted, thirteen years after Ezra had gone up to Jerusalem. He had gone up from Babylon (Ezra 7), but Nehemiah was occupied in the king's court as a personal attendant upon the king-"the king's cupbearer"-at Shushan. While engaged in his duties, he says, "Hanani, one of my brethren came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem." v. 2.

Nehemiah himself was thus an exile, but, though one of a captive race, he had found favor in the eyes of the king, and occupied a high and

Shushan (or Susa) was originally the capital of Elam; afterward it was incorporated into the kingdom of Babylon, and finally, on the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, it passed into the possession of Persia, of which it seems, at the time of Nehemiah, to have been the metropolis.

lucrative position. In such circumstances some might have forgotten the land of their fathers. Not so Nehemiah, for he was evidently known as one who did not cease to remember Zion, from the fact of the visit here recorded of his brother Hanani and certain men of Judah. And from the nature of his question, it will be perceived that his heart embraced all the people of the land. He inquired "concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity" (that is, concerning those that were left behind when so many were carried away captive to Babylon) "and concerning Jerusalem"-concerning the remnant that had gone up, with the permission of Cyrus, to build the Lord's house (Ezra 1). He was thus in fellowship with the heart of God, occupied as he was with His people and His interests. Surely Christians might learn many a lesson from these godly Jews. They never dreamed of isolating themselves from the whole nation, nor of seeking the welfare, for example of a single tribe, but their affections, according to their measure, moved throughout the entire circle of God's interests on the earth. They lost themselves, so to speak, in the welfare and blessing of the whole people. If the ties which bound them together were so intimate and imperishable, how much more should it be so with those who have all been baptized by one Spirit into one body!

In answer to his inquiry his visitor said, "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." v. 3. A sad account indeed of the chosen people in the land of promise! "A land," as Moses described it, "of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deut. 11:11, 12. But what a tale is unfolded by the present circumstances of the children of the captivity-a tale of sin, rebellion, and even apostasy. And what were their circumstances? They were in great affliction, arising out of their own moral condition and from the activity and enmity of their enemies by whom they were surrounded. (See chap. 4:1, 2.) They were also in reproach. It is blessed when God's people are reproached because they are His people or on account of the name of their God (compare 1 Pet.

4:14), but nothing is more sorrowful than when the Lord's people are reproached by the world through their inconsistent walk and ways. And it would seem from the close of the book of Ezra that the reproach in this case was of the latter kind. Professing to be what they really were- God's people-they were denying it by their alliances with the heathen and by their forgetfulness of the claims of their God.

That this is the interpretation of their affliction and sorrowful condition would seem to be borne out by the statement concerning Jerusalem: "The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." This was the fact, and Nebuchadnezzar had been the instrument, through his army, to accomplish it (see 2 Chron. 36). There is, however, another meaning. The wall is the symbol of separation, and, as we have seen, the wall of separation between Israel and the heathen had been broken down. The gate was the place, and thus the emblem, of judgment, and we are thereby instructed that justice and equity were no longer administered (see chap. 5).*

What then could be more lamentable than this report which was conveyed to Nehemiah concerning the remnant in Judah and Jerusalem? And the effect was great upon this truehearted Israelite. He says, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." v. 4. He made the sorrowful state of the people his own. He felt it according to God. In their affliction he was afflicted. But he knew to whom to turn. He wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. "Is any among you afflicted?" says James, "let him pray." And the sorrow and affliction of Nehemiah, as expressed in his tears, mourning, and fasting, found an outlet in his prayer. This was a true mark of a mighty action of the Spirit of God upon his soul.

Let us examine the nature of his supplications. He said, "I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments: let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses." vv. 5-7.

So far, there are chiefly two things-vindication of God, and confession of sins. Nehemiah owns most distinctly God's faithfulness, that there has been no failure on His part. At the same time, he fully recognizes the character of God's relationship with Israel-that, in other words, His attitude toward them depended on their conduct. "God... keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments." This, together with his address to God, brings out, in a most marked way, the contrast between law and grace. Devoted and God-fearing as Nehemiah was, one cannot but be sensible of distance in the terms which he uses-"O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God"-a distance necessitated by the dispensation under which he lived. How different from the place into which the Lord brought His disciples, consequent on His resurrection, as set forth in His words, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." But in the place he occupied, Nehemiah had learned what is rarely learned in such a measure even by Christians, that is, how to be an intercessor for his people. "Day and night" he

was praying for them, and hence it was that he had the power to confess their sins. No higher privilege could be given to a servant than this which was granted to Nehemiah—the power so to identify himself with Israel, as to enable him to take up and confess their sins as his own. "I," he says, "and my father's house have sinned." This is a true sign of spiritual power.

Many can lament the condition of God's people, but there are few who can identify themselves with it. It is only such that can truly intercede for them in the presence of God. And let it be noted that, as yet, he could only take God's part against himself and his people. God is ever faithful to those that love Him and observe His commandments, but they had not kept His commandments, nor His statutes, nor His judgments. All this is fully confessed, but he now turns to a promise on which he can ground his prayer and count upon the interposition of God on his behalf. He proceeds: "Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out into the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there." vv. 8, 9. This reference is undoubtedly to Leviticus 26, and looks on to the final restoration of Israel. And herein lay the spiritual intelligence of Nehemiah, as led of the Spirit, for this restoration, as the reader may perceive if he turns to the chapter, will be a work of pure grace founded upon God's absolute and unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see Lev. 26:42).

Nehemiah really, therefore, threw himself, while confessing the sins of his people, upon the mercy and unconditional promises of God. He rose in this way above law, and reached, in his faith, the source of all blessing—the heart of God Himself. Hence he adds, gathering strength by waiting on God, "Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand." v. 10. He thus touchingly presents Israel, sinners and transgressors as they were, before God on the ground of redemption, reminding God, as He graciously permits His people to do, of His purposes of grace toward them.

Having reached the only foundation on which he could rest, he presents the special petition that lay upon his heart. "O Lord," he says, "I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name: and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer." It is to be observed that Nehemiah associated others with him in his prayer. It was continually so also with the Apostle Paul. The fact is, when we are led of, the Spirit of God we necessarily identify all in whose hearts He is also working with ourselves, whether in service, or in thanksgivings, or prayer. So much one are the people of God, that isolation in spirit is impossible, and hence, when Nehemiah is bowed before God in his sorrow for the state of Israel and his desires for their deliverance and blessing, he is assured that every godly Israelite is united with him in his supplications. His prayer is very simple; it is for "mercy in the sight of this man." For he knew that it was only through the king's permission that his desire could be accomplished. The scepter of the earth having been transferred by God Himself, consequent upon the sin and rebellion of His chosen people, to the Gentiles, in acknowledgment of the authority which He Himself had ordained, God would now work only through and by means of the Gentile king. Nehemiah was therefore in communion with the mind of God in making this prayer. But it will also be perceived that, while he understood the position in which he and his people were placed in

subjection to Gentile authority, the king was nothing, in the presence of God, but "this man." A monarch of almost universal dominion, he dwindled into nothingness before the eyes of faith, being nothing but a man invested with a brief authority for the accomplishment of the purposes of God. Faith thus recognizes that, while the king was the appointed channel through which the requisite permission to go to Jerusalem must be obtained, all depended not upon the king, but upon God acting on his mind to grant what Nehemiah desired.

Then Nehemiah adds the explanation-"For I was the king's cupbearer"-to show how, humanly speaking, he was both entirely subject to and dependent on the king. With this the chapter closes. Nehemiah has poured out his heart before the Lord, made known his request, and now he must wait many days in expectation of the answer to his cries. A prayer may be entirely according to the will of God, and the fruit of communion with His mind, and yet not be answered immediately. This should be well understood, or the soul might be plunged into distress and unbelief without a cause. A prayer is often heard and granted, although God waits, in His infinite wisdom, for the suited moment to bestow the answer. This was the case with that of Nehemiah.

The Book of Nehemiah

This chapter is divided into several sections. First, we have the record of the manner in which God answered His servant's prayer and disposed the heart of the king to grant all that was necessary for Nehemiah's journey and mission (vv. 1-8). Then there is a brief account of his journey to Jerusalem, together with the effect it produced in certain quarters (vv. 9-11). Next, Nehemiah describes his nocturnal survey of the condition of the walls of the city, as also his conference with the rulers upon the object he had in view (vv. 12-18). And, last, the opposition of the enemies of God's people is given, with Nehemiah's answer (vv. 19-20).

It is exceedingly interesting to observe the way in which God brought about the accomplishment of Nehemiah's desire. Four months had passed since he had offered the prayer recorded in chapter 1. He is careful to give us the dates. In the month Chisleu (answering to our November) he had prayed, and in the month Nisan (answering to our March) the answer came. During this period, man of faith as he was, he must have waited in daily expectation upon God. He could not foresee how the answer would come, but he knew that God could intervene when and how He would, and thus, to borrow a Hebrew expression, "in waiting he waited." It is in this way God both tries and strengthens the faith of His people. He waits while they wait. But if He wait, it is only to shut His people up to more entire dependence upon Himself, and thus to prepare their hearts more fully for the blessing He is about to bestow. And when He steps in, it is often, as in this case, in such a quiet and unseen way-unseen by all but the eye of faith-that it needs the exercise of faith to detect His presence. How natural then is the way, on the surface, in which Artaxerxes was induced to give Nehemiah permission to visit Jerusalem, etc., only it must be remembered that Nehemiah had prayed that God would "grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Let us examine the scene.

The chapter, as it opens, shows us Nehemiah occupied with the duties of his office as the king's cupbearer. He "took up the wine, and gave it unto the king," but his heart was occupied with other things, burdened as it was with the unutterable sorrow of his people's condition. But wine and sadness are incongruous, and it was intolerable to the king that his cupbearer should wear a sorrowful face at such a time. It destroyed his own pleasure. And Nehemiah confesses that he "had not been beforetime sad in his presence." The king therefore was angry and said, "Why is thy

countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." "Then," says Nehemiah, "I was very sore afraid." v. 2. And well he might have been, for in such a mood, like a true oriental despot, Artaxerxes might have ordered him forth to instant execution. But even if afraid, God preserved to him his presence of mind, and led him, out of the abundance of his heart, to tell simply and truly the cause of his sorrow. He said to the king, "Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" v. 3.

The king was not unacquainted with the subject of his cupbearer's sorrow, for it was he who had permitted Ezra to go up to build the temple, and had himself given gold and silver to aid his object.

And God used Nehemiah's simple words to interest the king once more in the condition of Jerusalem. And he said, "For what dost thou make request?" Surely most would have hastened to answer the king, assuredly concluding that he would be certain, since he had deigned to put the question, to grant the desired favor. Not so Nehemiah (and this brings out a special trait of his character), for he says, "So I prayed to the God of heaven," and afterward presented his petition. Not that we are to conclude that he kept the king waiting, by no means. But the point to be observed is that before he answered his master he cast himself upon his God—he prayed to the God of heaven. He thus acknowledges his dependence for wisdom to say the right thing, and reveals the special characteristic which another has termed "a heart that habitually turned to God." We might well seek to have the same grace, for surely it is blessed to be so walking in dependence on God, that when in the presence of difficulties, perplexities, and dangers, we naturally (if we may use the word) look to the Lord for the needed wisdom, direction, and help. When this is the case, the presence of God will be more real to us than the presence of men.

Having prayed, Nehemiah makes his request—"If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchers, that I may build it." v. 5. The king (who had the queen at that moment sitting with him), having asked how long he proposed to be absent, etc., at once granted his request. Nehemiah, perceiving his opportunity—the opportunity God had granted—and strengthened by his faith, waxed bolder, and ventured to ask for royal letters "to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come unto Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into." Such were his objects, precise and defined: the restoration of the fortress, necessary for the protection of the temple, the rebuilding of the walls of the city, and the erection of a house suitable for himself in the exercise of his office. "And," we read, "the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." v. 8. Before God he had poured out the desires of his heart (desires which God Himself had produced), to God he had looked for guidance and strength when in the presence of the king, and God now showed that He had undertaken for His servant by inclining the king to grant all that was necessary for the accomplishment of the work. And Nehemiah acknowledged this; it was "according to the good hand of my God upon me."

It is well for us to mark this principle in the ways of God with His people. If He puts within our hearts a desire for any service—a service for His glory—He will surely open out before us the way to it. If it be really His work on which our minds are set, He will enable us to do it in His own way and

time. The door may seem to be closed and barred, but if we wait on Him "who openeth, and no man shutteth," we shall find that it will suddenly open to us, so that we may enter in without let or hindrance. There could be no more

difficult position than this of Nehemiah, but the Lord who had touched his heart with the affliction of His people removed all obstacles and set him free for his labor of love in Jerusalem. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Nehemiah lost no time in the execution of his purpose. He knew how to redeem the opportunity, for he adds, "Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters." But he had not gone alone; he was escorted by captains of the army and horsemen (v. 9). There is a great difference, therefore, between his and Ezra's journey to Jerusalem. Ezra would not ask the king for any military escort, because he had expressed to the king his confidence in God (Ezra 8:22), and God had abundantly justified his confidence, in guarding him and his companions "from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way." Nehemiah was not endowed with the same simple faith, but, though a godly and devout man, he traveled with the pomp and circumstance of one of the king's governors. In a way, therefore, he was more likely to secure the respect of the world and the assistance of the king's servants.

But, immediately on his arrival, there was the sign of opposition to his mission—an opposition which grew and confronted him at every step, for in fact it was the opposition of Satan to the work of God. At first it seemed a very small thing. It says, "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." v. 10. And why should they be grieved? The nationality of Sanballat is uncertain; probably he was a Moabite, and his servant was an Ammonite, and of these it is written, "that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever." (Chap. 13:1; Deut. 23:3-6.) They were, therefore, the implacable foes of Israel, and, being as such the suited instruments of Satan, they were naturally antagonistic to any effort to improve the condition of the people they despised. And, indeed, Satan's object is gained in the corruption of God's people; as long as they are living in forgetfulness of their true place and character, associating themselves with the world, and adopting its manners and customs, Satan will be a professed friend. But the moment a man of God appears on the scene, and seeks to recall them to the claims of God and His truth, Satan is roused to active enmity. Not that this is always avowed. As in the case before us, his servants are only "grieved"—grieved, of course that the peace between Israel and their enemies, should be disturbed. For the faithful ones in the midst of God's people, like Elijah of old, are ever regarded as the troublers of Israel—troublers because they stand for God in the midst of evil.

Hence it was that Sanballat and Tobiah were "grieved" at the advent of Nehemiah, and, as we shall see, so bitter was their hatred, that they spared no labor to baffle him in his work, and even to plot his death. So far, however, the fact of their "grief" only is noticed, but the Spirit of God shows us thus the cunning of Satan, and the method of his activities.

There follows, in the next place, the account of Nehemiah's survey of the state of Jerusalem. After three days, he says, "I arose in the night," the burden of his mission pressing upon his soul so that he could not rest, "I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon." v.

12. This simple statement reveals the characteristics of a true servant. First, he confesses the source of his inspiration for his work. God had put the thought of it into his heart. The assurance of this is the secret of all strength and perseverance in service. Thus the Lord said to Joshua, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage." Then, as already noted, Nehemiah could not rest until he had commenced his labors. The work of God permits no delays. This principle is involved in the charge of our blessed Lord to His disciples, "Salute no man by the way." When He sent them forth, they must go straight on their mission. So Nehemiah felt, and he thus sallied forth on the first opportunity to learn the character and extent of the work God had put into his heart to do at Jerusalem.

He tells us, moreover, that he did not communicate his secret to any. To have done so, indeed, might have raised up hindrances on every hand. When the Lord distinctly enjoins a service upon any of His servants, nothing is frequently more dangerous than consultation with others. Faith trusts in Him who commissions for the work, for the strength and wisdom needed in its execution. Conference with others often produces many questions, such as, Is it possible? Is it wise? or, Is it the proper time? And the effect is that faith droops under the influence of many a suggested doubt, if it does not become altogether extinguished by prudence and common sense. When the time arrives for the mission to be executed, helpers may be welcomed, but until all is arranged according to the dictates of faith, the secret must be kept between the soul and God.

From verses 13-15, the description is given of Nehemiah's tour of inspection, and of the condition in which he found the walls and gates of the city—a condition which corresponded exactly with the report brought to him in Shushan. (Compare verse 13 with chapter 1:3.) No one suspected the object Nehemiah had in view, for he adds, "And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work." v. 16. He had made his survey in silence—alone with God (though some attendants were with him), and gathered strength from his communings with God during the solemnity of that eventful night; if his heart had been touched by the desolations of the holy city, it was only a feeble reflection of the pity and the compassion of Jehovah for the place which He Himself had chosen, and where, during the kingdom, He had dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat.

All was now prepared, and hence the next thing we find is that Nehemiah took the rulers into his confidence. He could allow no one to advise as to the work, because he had received his mission from the Lord, but now that it was only a question of its execution, he could welcome the aid and fellowship of others. This is ever the path of the man of faith. He cannot alter or modify his purposes, but he rejoices in associating others with himself if they are willing to help forward, in dependence on the Lord, the object he has in view. Nehemiah, therefore, said to the rulers and the rest of the people, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." vv. 17, 18.

It is evident from this address also that Nehemiah's heart was sorely burdened with the condition of his people and city. It was the account of this which had first bowed him down to the ground in

the presence of God (chap. 1:3, 4), and the words then used seemed to have been indelibly graven on his heart, for he uses them again, as we have seen, in verse 13, as also now in speaking to the people. It was intolerable to him, in his zeal for the Lord and for Jerusalem, that His chosen people should be in such a reproach to the heathen around, and his one desire was to rebuild the wall of separation, and to restore justice and judgment in their midst by setting up the gates. Why should the boar out of the wood continue to waste the vine which God had once more, in His mercy, replanted, and the wild beast of the field devour it? (Psalm 80). Then, after exhorting them to build, he related to them concerning the hand of God which was good upon him, and concerning the king's permission (for by God's appointment, as the result of His judicial dealing, they were all subject to the king's authority to do the work which the hand of God had laid upon him. God wrought with His servant's words, and produced a ready response in His people's hearts, so that they said, "Let us rise up and build." When we are in communion with God's mind as to our service, He never fails to send the needed helpers. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power"-words which contain a principle for all dispensations, for it is always true that when God goes forth in power for the accomplishment of any purpose, He prepares willing-hearted servants to execute His designs. So, in the present instance, "they strengthened their hands for this good work," for they had been made to feel that it was of God.

This working of the Spirit of God aroused again the opposition of the enemy. Whenever God works, Satan counterworks. It was so now, for "when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?" v. 19. In addition to the Moabite and Ammonite, there is now an Arabian -every form of the flesh, as it were, lusting against the Spirit, stirred up as it had been by the craft and subtlety of Satan. It will be observed also that the opposition now assumes another character. At first Sanballat and Tobiah were grieved exceedingly at the intervention of Nehemiah. They pretended to be sorry that he should come and disturb the peace that had prevailed between Israel and the heathen, but now they "laughed us to scorn, and despised us." One weapon is as good as another in the hands of the enemy. Seeing that their grief did not affect the purposes of Nehemiah, they would try mockery and contempt, and at the same time, they would, if possible, produce fear by insinuating a charge of rebellion. Surely we need to be acquainted with the wiles and devices of Satan, for he knows how to work upon every possible feeling of the natural man. Nehemiah, strong in the sense of the protection of God, and knowing that he was in the path of obedience, was proof against all his artifices. He said, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." v. 20. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," says the Apostle James. Nehemiah resisted him by a bold confession of the name of his God, of confidence in His protecting care, and by the expression of His claims over His servants, and by the utter refusal of the title of the enemy to any right or interest in the holy city. There is nothing like boldness in the face of the adversary, but this can only spring from a divine courage, begotten by the assurance that if God be for us, none can be against us (Rom. 8:31). E.D.

The Book of Nehemiah

The zeal of Nehemiah was used of the Lord to rouse almost the whole people. There were degrees of energy among them and, it may be, lukewarmness if not hostility in the hearts of some, but outwardly, and by profession, nearly all came forth and offered their services as builders. It

was, in fact, a real revival, and such a one as could only be produced by the Spirit of God. And the value God set upon it is seen in that He has caused the names of those who engaged in this work to be written and preserved. This very circumstance shows that they had His mind in building the wall. It could not be otherwise, for what was the meaning of their proposed work? It was that they, led forth by Nehemiah, confessed their need of separation from the nations around, and took measures to secure it. Ages before, Moses had said to the Lord, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Exod. 33:16. They had forgotten this

truth, but now, through grace, they were once again about to take the place of a people set apart for God. Such is the significance of the activity recorded in this chapter, though their energy and faithfulness were soon proved to be like the morning cloud that passes away.

This interesting chapter reminds us of Rom. 16 in which the Apostle Paul, as guided of the Spirit, specifies many of the saints by name, and describes in many cases, their different characteristics in service. For example, he says, "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord." v. 12. Thus by adding two words in his salutation to Persis, he gives her a special place before God, as well as in his affections and the affections of the saints, and a superior commendation. So in our chapter we read, "After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece." v. 20. It tells us with what minuteness (if we may so speak) God surveys His people, how carefully He notes the state of their hearts and the character of their service, and how gratifying to Him is the exhibition of devotedness to His glory. Such commendations should stir us all up to seek to have the same zeal and unwearied diligence in the Lord's service.

Eliashib the high priest, and his brethren the

priests, are the first workers mentioned-not, it is to be concluded, because they surpassed the rest in energy or devotedness, but rather because of the position they occupied among the people. It is their rank, as will be afterward seen, that gives them the precedence in the record. "They builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel." Comparing this account with that in verse 3, a significant difference will be noted. "But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof." (See also v. 6.) The high priest and his brethren built a gate, and set up its door, but they did not lay "the beams thereof" to give it stability, nor is it mentioned that they provided locks or bars. The truth is, they were not so much in earnest as the sons of Hassenaah and Jehoiada the son of Paseah and his companion. They were willing to have the gate and its doors, but they made no provision to make it secure, in case of need, against the ingress of the enemy. They did not object to the convenience, but they were not prepared to renounce all commerce with the enemy.. The reason was, that Eliashib himself, in whose mouth the law of truth should have been found, who should have walked with God in peace and equity and turned many from iniquity (Mal. 2:6), was allied unto Tobiah the Ammonite (chap. 13:4), and his grandson was son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite (chap. 13:28). He had, therefore, only a faint heart for the work of separation, connected as he was by such intimate ties with the enemies of Israel, though under the influence of the

energetic Nehemiah, he made a show of agreement with his brethren in their efforts to rebuild the wall and gates of the city. It was a solemn position for the high priest, as well as a source of danger to the people.

In verse 5 an expression is noted: "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." The Tekoites were willing servants, for in verse 27 it is said that they "repaired another piece." They evidently were zealous men, and this in spite of the indifference, if not opposition, of "their nobles." It is often the case, when God is working in the midst of His people, that the "nobles" are outside the circle of blessing. Even as not many mighty, not many noble are called of God in His grace, so in revivals, in new and distinct actions of the Spirit of God, the first to respond to His energy are generally found among the poor and despised. The "nobles" may, in God's tender mercy, be drawn in afterward, but He most frequently begins with the poor of this world, whom He has chosen rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him. Moreover, the cause of the dissent of these nobles is apparent. They "put not their necks to the work of their Lord." Pride was governing their hearts. They could not stoop low enough. They were not accustomed to the yoke, and they thus preferred their own importance and ease to the Lord's work. What a contrast to Him who, though rich, became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich forever! He came into this world to do the will of God, and was in the midst of His own "as He that serveth." Having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, He has, in His unspeakable grace and love, become forever the servant of His people. It is well for every child of God to learn the lesson that it is only in bowing their necks to the Lord's yoke that rest

to their souls can be found. The nobles of Tekoa chose their own will, and by their stubbornness lost the

blessing of the service offered to them, and at the same time procured for themselves everlasting exclusion from the commendation given to their brethren, as well as a mark of condemnation for their pride.

In several cases it is specified that certain repaired over against their houses (vv. 10, 23, 28, 29, etc.). In these notices two things have to be distinguished- the fact and the teaching of the fact. The fact was, as stated, that these children of Israel undertook the building of the wall opposite their own dwellings, but, over and above this, the Spirit of God would have us understand its meaning, and it is easy to find. We are thus taught-bearing in mind that the wall is an emblem of separation-that these servants of the Lord began first with their own houses, that they sought first of all to bring their own families into subjection to the word of God, and thereby to effect separation from evil within the circle of their own responsibility. This has ever been the divine order. Thus, when God called Gideon to be the deliverer of His people, He commanded him to throw down the altar of Baal in his father's house before he could go forth to battle against the Midianites. As another has remarked, "Faithfulness within precedes outward strength. Evil must be put away from Israel before the enemy can be driven out. Obedience first and then strength. This is God's order."

The record, therefore, that these several individuals repaired every one over against his house, shows that conscience was at work, that they rightly understood God's claims upon them in the sphere of their own homes, and that they felt that to set their houses in order was a necessary qualification for any public service. This principle obtains also in the Church. "A bishop," writes the

Apostle, must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." And deacons are also required to rule "their children and their own houses well" (1 Tim. 3). It is to the loss of the Church and of the saints, as well as to the damage of the souls of those who take the place of rule in the assembly, when this principle is neglected. It is true that the Spirit of God enjoins us to obey them that have the rule over us, but it is likewise important that those who have the lead should possess the scriptural qualifications for the places they have assumed or accepted.

Another interesting point may be noticed. Some who built the gates and assisted with the wall did not repair over against their houses. Eliashib, the high priest, was an example of this (compare v. 1 with vv. 20 and 21). Then there were those who repaired over against their houses but are not said to have assisted in building the gates, etc. Two classes of saints are indicated by these examples. The first class is what may be termed ecclesiastical saints, that is, those who are strong upon Church truth, and in maintaining the truth of separation from evil for the Church, and at the same time are careless as to their own houses. A more sorrowful spectacle cannot be presented in the Church of God (and one not infrequently seen), than when a public advocate of the claims of Christ over His people, of the maintenance of His authority in the midst of those who are gathered to His name, allows his own house, through its disorder, to become an occasion of reproach by the enemy. Eliashib is an example, in this very chapter, of this class. Whatever the indifference of his heart, he was professedly

engaged in the maintenance of separation and justice

and judgment in Israel-through building, together with his brethren, the gate, and sanctifying it, while at the same time he left others to care for the wall over against his own house. (See vv. 20, 21.)Tending the vineyard of others, his own vineyard he had not kept, and this is proved by the fact already mentioned, that he was allied unto Tobiah the Ammonite, while his grandson married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Eli and Samuel and David of an earlier day are also examples of this numerous class.

Then there are others, as we learn from this chapter, who, most zealous in tending their own houses, and regulating them according to God, are almost entirely careless of the welfare of the Church. Such have apprehended the truth that they themselves individually are to be witnesses for Christ, but they have not learned that the Church is to be a light-bearer in the midst of the world. In other words, they have not realized the oneness of God's people, that believers are "the body of Christ, and members in particular." As a consequence, while they fully admit the Word of God is their guide as to their individual path, they do not recognize its authority over the saints collectively or corporately. Thus they are often linked with departures from the truth through disregard for the supremacy of Christ as Head of the Church. But if we understand the position in which, through grace, we have been set, it will be our earnest desire to unite the repairing over against our own houses with building the wall and the gates.

Nothing in the service of the Lord's people passes unnoticed, and thus in verse 12 we read that "next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloheh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters." The zeal of these godly women has thus obtained for them a place in this memorial of the work of the Lord. Such a record, as well as the more abundant records of the New Testament, shows that there is never any difficulty as to women's place in service when they are

filled with the energy of the Spirit of God. The account of Joanna the wife of Chuza, Susanna, and many others who ministered to the Lord of their substance, of Mary and Martha, of Phoebe a servant of the Church, of Priscilla, of Persis, and of many more, is surely sufficient for guidance to any who are willing to sit at Jesus' feet and learn His mind. This scripture gives, us not necessarily what man saw, but what God saw. The father and his daughters were all engaged in repairing the wall, and the fact that it is mentioned is its commendation. Beyond this, nothing can be said, but the examples already cited are enough to teach that there is room enough in the Church of God, and also in the world, for women's utmost energy and devotedness to Christ, provided it be exhibited in subjection to, Him and to His Word.

In the case of Meshullam the son of Berechiah, it is said that he repaired over against his chamber (v. 30). It would seem that he had no house, only a lodging, but though the circle of his responsibility was narrow, he was found faithful. The Apostle, speaks thus of stewardship: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." This should be a comfort to those who are tempted to long after wider spheres of service. It is fidelity in the place in which the Lord has placed us that He values and commends, and hence the work of Meshullam is singled out for notice equally with that of Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah, of whom it is said, that he repaired "the gate of the fountain... he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David." v. 15. Reviewing the whole chapter, two other points of great importance may be specified. The reader will observe that some labored in companies and some alone. Some were happiest when serving in fellowship with their brethren, and some preferred, while in full communion with the object their brethren had in view, to labor in single-eyed dependence upon, and alone with, the Lord. The same thing is observed in every age of the Church. There are vessels which are adapted for lonely service, and there are others almost useless unless in association with others. There are dangers besetting the path of both. The former are often tempted to be isolated and to forget that the Lord has other servants working for the same ends, while the latter are sometimes betrayed into forgetfulness of individual dependence, as well as into the sacrifice of their own convictions as to the Lord's will in order to secure peace and union. The important thing is to receive the service from the Lord, to labor as He directs, to go where He sends, whether alone or in company with others, and always to maintain a single eye to His glory. Happy is that servant who has learned the lesson that it is the Lord's will, and not his own, which must govern the whole of his activities.

The second noteworthy thing is the variety of the services of these children of Israel. One did one thing and one another, while all were working for the same end. Paul, speaking of this, says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation," etc. Rom. 12:6-8. The importance of occupying the position given us to fill, and of exercising the special gift, or function in the body, bestowed upon us, cannot be too much pressed. Every Christian has his own place which no one else can fill, and his own work which no other can do, and the health and prosperity of the assembly depend on the recognition and practice of this truth.

The Book of Nehemiah

In chapter 3 we have a beautiful presentation of the energy of the Spirit of God in the devoted service of His people. Whenever the people of God are active, however, Satan is aroused, and he seeks by every means in his power to raise up hindrances and obstacles. This is illustrated once more in the opening verses of this chapter, which give us the third form of his opposition to the work of God's builders. In chapter 2:10, the enemy was "grieved... exceedingly." Then he tried mockery and scorn (2:19), and now he assumes the weapons of anger and indignation. "It came to pass," we read, "that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." vv. 1-3. The language of both Sanballat and Tobiah was inconsistent with their feelings. It is in verse 1 that we find their real state of mind. It was wrath and indignation that possessed their souls, for they knew full well the significance of the activity of the children of Israel. But when they spoke they concealed their anger with affected contempt. If, however, the "feeble Jews" were working in vain, if the wall they were building were of such a contemptible character, why were Sanballat and Tobiah so angry? It was good for the builders that their leader was on the watch, and, armed at every point against the devices of Satan, knew how to use the shield wherewith to quench his fiery darts. For what was Nehemiah's resource in the presence of this new form of hostility?

He said, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised." v. 4. He simply turned to God in the assurance that He cared for His people and that He would be their defense and their shield, engaged as they were in His own service. It is always blessed when we can take all the enemy's revilings to, and leave them with, God. In the energy and impatience of nature, we are too apt to attempt to meet the foe in our own strength, and thus we often rush into the conflict only to encounter defeat and disaster. But faith turns the eye upward and commits all to the Lord. Hezekiah furnishes us with a beautiful illustration of this when he went up into the house of the Lord and spread before Him the letter which he had received from Rabshakeh, who commanded the army of Sennacherib. In like manner Nehemiah cried, "Hear, O God." And mark his plea-"for we are despised." God's people are precious in His sight, and to despise them is to despise Him. Nehemiah had entered into this, and thus made his appeal to the heart of God. Having cast himself in this way upon God, and placed himself and the people (for he fully identifies himself with them) under His protection, he gathers strength to pray against the enemy. "Turn," he says, "their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity; and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee: for they have provoked Thee to anger before the builders." vv. 4, 5. It may surprise the superficial reader that such a prayer could be offered. Two things should be remembered: first, the dispensation under which the people were, and second, that the enemies of Israel were the enemies of God. Sanballat and Tobiah were deliberately setting themselves in opposition to the work of the Spirit of God. And all may learn from this prayer, as Saul afterward had to learn in another way, what a solemn thing it is to persecute God's people and to hinder His work. Thus the ground on which Nehemiah urges his petition is, "They have provoked Thee to anger before the builders." The cause of these despised children of the captivity was the cause of God, and it was in this confidence that Nehemiah found, as all believers who are in fellowship with the mind of God in their labors may find, encouragement to invoke His aid against their foes.

But if Nehemiah prayed (as we shall see again), it did not interfere with his or the people's labors; we might rather say that his perseverance in his work sprang from his prayers. We say his prayers for these are his individual cries to God, and his cries in secret to God. We are permitted to view the inner life of this devoted servant, as well as his public labors. No ear but God's heard these supplications, though they are recorded to teach us that the secret of all true activity, as well as of courage in the presence of danger, is realized dependence on the Lord. Thus, after Nehemiah records his prayer, he adds, "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for all the people had a mind to work." v. 6. This is a blessed record, and one which testifies to the energy of the Spirit of God acting through Nehemiah upon the people, and producing unanimity and perseverance. For when it says, "The people had a mind to work," it means that they had God's mind. Sometimes unanimity may be seen and the fact gloried in irrespective of the consideration of whether or not it is according to the mind of God. To be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10) as the result of divine power ensures the successful accomplishment of any service to which God calls His people, because with His Spirit ungrieved He is able to work without hindrance in their midst.

This spectacle of united perseverance in the work of God excited the foe to more determined opposition. Having tried many weapons without success to deter the people from building the wall, he now produces another. "It came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against

Jerusalem, and to hinder it." vv. 7, 8. Before, there

were only a few individuals, but now there are numbers. Satan, finding that Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem could not succeed by themselves, draws others to their help--the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites--these last being entirely new allies. In fact, he collects an army, as force is the weapon he is now about to try. But what was it that aroused the enemy anew to attempt to hinder the work? It was the report that they had heard, that "the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped." It was now evident that the children of the captivity were in earnest, and that they, under the leadership of Nehemiah, were determined to shut out evil by erecting the wall and stopping the breaches. This never suits Satan, whose desire ever is to break down all distinction between the people of God and the world, and hence it was that he marshaled his forces in order to prevent "these feeble Jews" from accomplishing their purpose.

And what had the children of Israel to meet this array of power on the part of the adversary? They had a leader whose confidence was in God, and who had learned the lesson Elisha taught his servant when the king of Syria had sent an army to take him, namely, that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Nothing daunted, therefore, by the increasing numbers and rage of the enemy, he says, "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them." He thus combined dependence on God, in whom alone he knew his strength and defense to be, with unceasing vigilance against the "roaring lion." These are the two invisible weapons which God puts into the hands of His people in the presence of the enemy, and these weapons suffice to defeat his most powerful assaults. Thus the Lord, in the

prospect of the advancing power of Satan against His disciples, said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matt. 26:41. The Apostle likewise writes, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance," etc. (Eph. 6:18), knowing that unless watchfulness were maintained Satan would soon decoy the soul into forgetfulness and sloth. Nehemiah, therefore, was divinely instructed in his means of defense, which, indeed, placed a rampart between him and his foes, against which, if they dashed, it would be only to encounter certain destruction. And observe that the watchfulness (day and night) was as unceasing as the prayer. In this sense there is no rest for the Christian. Having done all, he is still to stand, for as the enemy is unresting in his attacks, the believer must be unceasing in the use of his means of defense.

A new source of danger is now discovered. Without were fightings, and now within were fears. "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall." v. 10. As long as "the people had a mind to work," the danger from without, met as it was by watchfulness and prayer, mattered only a little, but the difficulty was great when the people themselves became fainthearted and weary. The cause of Judah's despondency was twofold. First, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed." Judah had forgotten that the Lord was the strength of His people, and that if He places a burden of service upon the shoulders of any of His people, He gives also the needful strength for its execution. Second, they said that on account of the quantity of rubbish it was impossible to build the wall. So have many said since Judah's day. The corruptions in the Church have been so many, so much "rubbish" has been imported on every side, that, despairing of carrying out separation from evil according to the Word of God, souls have often been betrayed into acceptance of the very things they deplore. It is impossible, they say, to conform themselves now to the Word of God, to restore the authority of the Scriptures over the conduct and activities of the Church, to give the place of pre-eminence to the Lord in the midst of His gathered people, to draw the line of distinction between those who are His and those who are not, and we must, therefore, accept things as they are. Granted that there is much rubbish, it is yet clear that the Word of God never abates its claims upon His people, and 2 Timothy teaches most distinctly that the responsibility of building the wall is as binding upon the saints when the house of God is in ruins, as was that of maintaining the wall when His house was in order. The fact was, the effect of the display of the enemy's power, and the prospect of incessant warfare had discouraged the heart of Judah, and he sought to find a justification for his state of soul in the condition of the burden-bearers, and in the obstacles to his work. Many of us can understand this, for to labor under constant discouragements and in the presence of active enemies tries the spirit and tempts us to abandon our service, especially when we have ceased to derive our strength and motives to perseverance from communion with the Lord.

Two other dangers are indicated in verses 11 and 12. The adversaries sought to keep the builders in a continual state of alarm by threatening a sudden onslaught, and thus to wear them out, as they had partially done in the case of Judah, by the strain of continual apprehension. The Jews, moreover, that "dwelt by them," those, that is, who were not inhabitants of Jerusalem, but were scattered through the land in the vicinity of their foes, these came, and assured the builders "ten times," that danger was really impending, that their adversaries would certainly execute their threats. To sight, therefore, there was little, if anything, to encourage, but perils of every kind were

hemming them in, threatening both the continuation of their work, and even their own lives.

If, however, the enemy was unwearying in his assaults, Nehemiah was even more untiring in his watchfulness and defense, and the rest of the chapter (vv. 13-23) gives us a most interesting and detailed account of the measures he adopted for the security of the people, for the progress of the work, and of the manner in which they builded. In the first place, he arranged for the defense by setting "in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places... the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows." These were both duly ordered and fully armed, for when Satan is in question we are powerless unless we are in the right place and equipped with divine weapons. (Compare Eph. 6:10-17.) Thereupon Nehemiah inspired the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people with words of exhortation. He said, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." v. 14. The frequency of the exhortation in the Scriptures, not to be afraid, addressed to God's people, shows how prone we are to yield to fear in the conflicts we are called upon to wage. It is both the first symptom of want of confidence in God, and the sure forerunner of defeat if fear continues to possess our souls. Hence, when Israel went forth to battle in olden days, the proclamation had to be made, as in the case of Gideon's army, "What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." Deut. 20:8. While, however, Nehemiah urged them not to fear, he supplied the antidote; "Remember the Lord," he says, "which is great and terrible." For he knew that if they once apprehended the character and presence of God, if they brought Him in, by the exercise of faith, and measured the foe by what He was, they would be filled with courage, and be able to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He sought in this way to nerve their arm for the battle, and thus he continued, "and fight for your brethren," etc. The battle was the Lord's, and yet it was for all that was dearest to them in the world that they were to fight.

The Book of Nehemiah

The effect of Nehemiah's vigilant and energetic activity and preparation for defense was to dishearten the foe. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," if but "for a season." The enemy heard that their plans had come to the knowledge of Nehemiah, and that God had thus frustrated their counsel, and they seem to have retreated for the moment, for all of the Jews were able to return to the wall-every one to his work. In this way God responded to the faith of His devoted servant by baffling the adversary's designs. But Nehemiah was not ignorant of Satan's devices, and did not for a minute believe the danger was over. He knew his restless enemy too well to imagine that he had given up his designs against the Lord's people and the Lord's work, and while, therefore, the builders recommenced their labor, Nehemiah made effectual provision for defense in case of a sudden attack. His own servants, we read, he divided into two companies, the one of which builded, and the other "held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons." Then he placed the rulers behind all the house of Judah-evidently to encourage them to resistance if attacked by the foe (v. 16). Combining this with the description of the manner in which they builded-"every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded"-and with the other added details, some most interesting instruction may be gleaned.

First, and foremost, the several classes of laborers may be specified. There were some wholly devoted to the work. There were others who were entirely occupied with the weapons of warfare

(v. 16). So it is in the Church of God. Some of the Lord's servants are called and specially qualified for edification. They therefore occupy themselves with souls and with the assembly, laboring to build up themselves and others who are called to conflict, who are quick to discern the assaults of the enemy upon the truth of God, and wise in the power of the Holy Spirit to meet them with the weapons of their warfare, which are "not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10:4, 5. The builders, the burden-bearers, and those that laded, are also

distinguished (v. 17). Every one had his appointed work, and all contributed to the same end. This state of affairs is happy for the people of God, as may once more be seen when they perceive the special place for which they are qualified, and occupy it for the Lord. It is the forgetfulness of this truth that has in every age produced confusion in the Church, and hence too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of filling, and of being satisfied with filling, the place for which we have been divinely qualified. If we are burden bearers-burden bearers for others-let us not seek to be builders; if we are builders, let us wait on our building. The Lord and not the servant appoints to the work and qualifies for it.

But whether builders, burden-bearers, or "those that laded," one feature characterized them all alike-"Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." This in itself reveals the character of the times in which they labored. They were in fact perilous times, as we have seen, when the power of Satan was increasingly manifested in opposition to the people of God. These times were typical of that in which Jude labored, especially when he wrote his epistle, for we find the same two things in him-the sword and the trowel. He found it necessary to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and he also exhorted those to whom he wrote to build up themselves on their most holy faith. This is also the character of the present day-the perilous times in which our lot is cast. We may, therefore, well learn from Nehemiah's builders, that the divine way of being prepared for the assaults of the enemy is, while we have our weapons of defense in one hand, or our swords girded on our thigh, to be diligently occupied in building. The danger is, when controversies arise through Satan's attacks upon the truth, of forgetting the need of souls-of ceasing to build, of being so occupied with the enemy as to overlook the necessity of diligent and persistent ministrations of Christ to sustain and nourish souls, and thus to enable them to repel the enemy's assaults. God's people cannot be fed, built up, with controversies-a warning word which cannot be too loudly sounded forth at the present moment. Our positive work, even when expecting and on the outlook for the enemy, is building, and the more earnestly we build, the more secure we shall be when the enemy delivers his assault. The weapons must be ready, but our work is to go on with the wall.

Then there was the trumpeter. "And he." says Nehemiah, "that sounded the trumpet was by me." v. 18. The use of the holy trumpet may be gathered from Numbers 10. It was for "the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps." Moreover, in times of war, "an alarm" was to be blown-an alarm which not only assembled the people, but also came up before God, and called Him in, so that they might be saved from their enemies. And it was a command that only the priests should blow with the trumpets-only those who, from their nearness had intelligence of and were in communion with, the Lord's mind. So here, he who sounded the trumpet was to be with Nehemiah, and, therefore, only to sound it at his master's bidding. It was for Nehemiah to discern

the moment to sound, for the trumpeter to catch the first intimation of Nehemiah's mind and will. In like manner now, only those who are living in the enjoyment of their priestly privileges, in nearness to and in communion with the mind of Christ, know how to sound an alarm. To blow at their own will, or on their own apprehensions of danger, would only be to produce confusion, to call the builders away from their labors, and thus to do the work of the enemy. To be able to sound at the right moment, they must be with, and have their eyes upon, their Lord.

Nehemiah, in the next place, gave the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, directions concerning what they should do if they heard the sound of the trumpet (vv. 19, 20). Scattered, necessarily, in their labors, the moment the trumpet sounded they were to gather together around Nehemiah and the trumpeter. The Lord (if we speak of the spiritual instruction) was with him who had sounded the alarm. He had given the word, and the trumpeter had blown his trumpet, and the people must gather to the testimony that had gone forth. For the moment their labors must be suspended that they might assemble around the Lord and make common cause against the enemy. It would have been unfaithfulness, if the trumpet sounded, to continue their work, for the Lord's mind for them at that moment would be defense, conflict, and not building. Some of the builders, as often happens, might feel that it was far happier work to build than to fight, but the only question for them would be, Had the trumpet sounded? If it had, it would be for them to obey the summons. This brings out another important feature. In all these arrangements, one mind governs all. Nehemiah commands, and the part of the people, whether rulers, nobles, or the rest, was simply obedience. Thus it should ever be. The Lord-by His very title of Lord-claims the subjection of all His servants to His own will as expressed in the written Word. Last, Nehemiah tells them, "Our God shall fight for us;" falling back, doubtless, in the exercise of faith, upon God's own word, to which we have alluded, in connection with the blowing of an alarm in the time of war. For if God called the people together for the defense of His cause, He would surely deliver them from the power of the foe. And with what courage should the assurance inspire us, that, if by His grace we are associated with God as against the enemy, we may confidently count upon His succor. It is a battle cry-"Our God shall fight for us"-which will at the same time encourage His servants and strike dismay into the heart of the adversary.

The chapter then concludes with three additional particulars. "So," that is, in this manner, says Nehemiah, "we labored in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared." v. 21. They were ever on the alert, ready for the foe, and untiring in their service. They wrought while it was day, from early morning till late at night, for, as we have seen, they had a mind to work. He also at the same time said unto the people, "Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labor on the day." v. 22. The day was for labor, and the night for watchfulness. Satan loves the darkness; it is the element in which he lives and moves, even as his followers love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil (Eph. 6:12; John 3:19). The servants of the Lord therefore should never cease to be watchful, but must make provision for the night as well as for the day, even as we read in the Song of Solomon of the threescore valiant men who were about the bed, "which is Solomon's.... They all

hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night."

Chap. 3:7, 8. We learn then, from this instruction of Nehemiah, that the place of safety was "within Jerusalem," behind the walls that were being built, and that those who were found within should labor in the day, and keep watch during the night.

Finally, Nehemiah says, "So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing." v. 23. This statement, it will be observed, is not made concerning all the people, only concerning Nehemiah, his brethren, and his personal following-servants, and men of the guard. He thus set a blessed example, in the circle of his own responsibility, of personal devotedness. He knew how to refuse himself his own ease and comfort, in the Lord's service, to endure hardness as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:3). But he is careful to inform us that they put off their clothes to wash themselves, for those who are engaged in the Lord's work must not neglect personal defilements which would grieve the Holy Spirit, limit His power, and thus mar their usefulness. True, it is the Lord's work-His blessed work in grace-to wash His people's feet, but self-judgment is the process through which He leads us, through the Spirit, to effect our cleansing, and for this purpose we must "put off our clothes," everything that might conceal our condition from ourselves, that there may be no hindrance to the washing of water by the Word.

The Book of Nehemiah

In verse 1, the internal difficulty is indicated-"And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews." (Compare Acts 6.) "The people and... their wives" are evidently the poor, while "their brethren the Jews" are the rich. Division had come in through oppression by the latter, taking occasion through the poverty of the former to enrich themselves. (Compare James 5, and also 1 Cor. 11:17-22.) Some had sold their sons and daughters to the rich for corn, that they might eat and live. Some had, with the same object, under pressure from the dearth, mortgaged their lands, vineyards, and houses, and others had borrowed money upon the security of their lands and vineyards to pay the king's tribute. The rich had used the needs of their poorer brethren to become richer, and to bring them completely under their power. The poor, bowed to the dust under the heavy burden of their bondage and need, raised "a great cry," and said, "Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards." v. 5.

Such was the sad condition of the returned remnant, even while they were engaged in building the walls of their holy city, Jerusalem. Let us then seek to discover the root of this festering sore. It lies in a word-used twice-"their brethren," "our brethren." They were brethren as being common descendants of Abraham; and even in a deeper sense, as God's chosen people, they were alike on the ground of redemption. Therefore, all were on the same footing before Him-the common objects of His grace, and as such heirs together of the promises made to their fathers. It was in view of this that Malachi challenged them with the question, "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" Mal. 2:10. So now "the Jews" were dealing with the people as if they were not their brethren, in utter forgetfulness of the common relationship in which they stood before God, and so treating them as if they were aliens and heathen. The same evils reappear in

varying forms in every age, and are especially noticed in the epistle of James. (See chapter 1:9, 10; chapters 2 and 5.)

There was, however, more than forgetfulness of relationship in this conduct on the part of the Jews. There was also positive disobedience. (See Exod. 22:25; Deut. 15.) We may cite one verse: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth." Deut. 15:7, 8. (Read the whole chapter.)

As being themselves the recipients of grace, they were to express that grace to their brethren. (Compare 2 Cor. 8:9, and the following.) But instead of this they denied, as we have pointed out, the truth of their redemptive position, and, exhibiting a spirit of rigor and oppression for the sake of gain, they violated the plainest precepts of the Word of God. There are few who, as they read this narrative, would not condemn such gross disobedience, and yet it may be asked, What did it amount to? It was simply the adoption of human thoughts instead of God's, of worldly usages and practices instead of those prescribed in the Scriptures. In a word, these Jews walked as men, and as men who hastened to be rich at the expense of their brethren! And is this sin unknown in the Church of God? No. Do not the usages of society and the maxims of the world often force themselves among Christians, and regulate their mutual relationships? Let our own consciences answer the question in the presence of God, and we shall discover if the sin of these Jews has its counterpart today among the Lord's people.

This was the state of things among the returned captives-the restored remnant-a moral condition that necessarily crippled the efforts of Nehemiah to cope with the advancing tide of evil from without. He tells us, "I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words." His faithful heart entered into the sorrowful condition of his poor brethren, and he was righteously indignant with their oppressors. So Paul of a later date, according to the truth of the dispensation in which he was, exclaimed, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. 11:29. In both cases, the anger of Nehemiah and the sympathy of Paul, in their identification with the sorrows of God's people, were reflections, however feeble, of the heart of God Himself. (Compare Exod. 3:7, 8.)

The question for Nehemiah was, How could this state of things be remedied? The answer is found in verses 7-12. Observe the remarkable expression, "Then I consulted with myself" (v. 7), for therein is contained a principle of the utmost importance. The nobles and rulers with whom, in ordinary circumstances, he might have taken counsel, were the chief offenders, and therefore no light or assistance could be expected from them. Nehemiah was cast on his own resources, or rather he was shut up to God for guidance in the matter. When all have departed out of the way, and when, as a consequence, the authority of the Word of God has been obscured, the man of faith-one who desires to walk with God-cannot afford to consult with others, or he might be fettered with their counsel. He must act alone and for himself, at whatever cost, according to the Word, and in this necessity he finds both strength and courage, because it begets confidence in the Lord, and ensures His presence.

The next step was that Nehemiah "rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them." v. 7. He convicted

them of their sin (see Exod. 23:25), and according to the apostolic injunction, he rebuked them before all, saying, "We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer." v. 8.

There are several points in Nehemiah's address worthy of special remark. It will be seen, in the first place, that he is enabled to rebuke the offenders by contrasting their conduct with his own. He had redeemed his brethren from the heathen; they had brought them into bondage to themselves, lording it

over God's heritage. It is most blessed when a shepherd among the people of God can point to his own conduct as their guide. It was so with the Apostle

Paul. Again and again he was led of the Holy Spirit to refer to himself as an example. (See Acts 20:34, 35; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:5, 6.) So Nehemiah in this instance exposed the conduct of the nobles and rulers by contrasting their conduct with his own.

Nehemiah, out of love to his brethren, and out of grief for the dishonor their condition brought to Jehovah's name, spent his substance in their redemption; they, from love to themselves, and from a desire to increase in riches, used the necessities of their brethren to bind the yoke of bondage about their necks. Nehemiah showed the spirit of Christ, (compare 2 Cor. 8:9), and they the spirit of Satan.

Having thus exposed the nature of their conduct, he appeals to them on another ground. "Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" v. 9. This appeal shows how dear to Nehemiah was the honor of his God, and that it grieved him to the heart to think that the conduct of Israel should furnish a just occasion for reproach from the enemy. They claimed, and claimed rightly, to be God's chosen people, and as such to be holy, to be separated from all the rest of the nations for His service. But if in their walk they resembled the heathen, what became of their profession? They did not cease to be God's people, but by their conduct they denied that they were, and publicly profaned the holy name by which they were called. No greater damage can be done by God's people than to give the enemy just ground for taunting them with their practices. (Contrast 1 Pet. 2:11, 12; 3:15, 16; 4:15-17.) On this appeal he based his exhortation-first, to cease to do evil, and then, to learn to do well. Reminding them again that he and his brethren and servants might have acted, if they had chosen, in a similar manner, he says, "I pray you, let us leave off this usury." Remark that he says, "let us;" putting himself, in grace, alongside of them in their sins, acknowledging, indeed, that he was one with them before God, and seeking thus in a spirit of meekness to effect their restoration. Moreover, he urged upon them to make restitution, to give back that day "their lands," etc, "that ye exact of them." v. 11.

The Lord was with His servant, and they consented to do as they had been urged, but Nehemiah, unwilling to leave the matter in any doubt, or fearing that they might be tempted, when they went back to their own homes, to forget their promise, "called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise." Even more, to give greater solemnity to the transaction, he says, "Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the

congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise." v. 13. In this manner Nehemiah labored for the good of the people, and corrected the abuses that had sprung up in their midst to the destruction of order, holiness, and fellowship.

From verse 14 to the end of the chapter, Nehemiah is led to give an account of his own conduct as governor. Looking at this, according to man, it might seem to be self-commendation and exaltation, but it must never be forgotten that we are reading God's Word, and that it was therefore as guided by the Holy Spirit that this description is recorded for our instruction. And, as before observed, the lesson is, that the shepherds whom the Lord raises up for His people should ever be "ensamples to the flock." (See 1 Pet. 5:1-3.) Bearing this in mind, we shall be able to profit by the presentation of Nehemiah's conduct. First, he tells us that, for the twelve years he had been governor, neither he nor his brethren had eaten the bread of the governor, as his predecessors had done; that is, he had not, as he explains, been "chargeable unto the people" (vv. 14, 15). His office entitled him to be so, but he did not use this authority in this respect. We are again reminded of the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Cor. 9:11-13, and following; see also Acts 20:33 Thess. 2:9.) Neither did he, like the former governors, permit his servants to bear rule over the people. No abuse is more common, even in the Church of God, than that indicated here. For example, it is often seen to the sorrow of the saints and the perversion of divine order, that the relatives of those who rightly have the place of rule assume privilege and authority and expect to be acknowledged because of their relationship. As in Nehemiah's case, so also in the Church, office is personal, for qualification or gift is divinely bestowed and cannot be transmitted to another. Even Samuel failed in this respect when he made his sons judges, and it was their conduct that provoked the people of Israel to desire a king (1 Sam. 8:1-5).

Nehemiah was saved from giving his household special privileges by walking and acting in fear before God. "So did not I," he says, "because of the fear of God." This reveals to us a man whose conscience was tender and in lively exercise—one who was watchful over his ways and conduct, lest he might be governed by self-will or his own advantage instead of God's word—one who cherished a habitual reverence both for His presence and for His authority, and, maintaining a holy fear in his soul, ever sought to commend himself to the Lord. This was the secret both of his uprightness and his devotedness, for he was able to say that he had been willing to spend and be spent in the Lord's service. "Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work." He gave himself to the work; he sought no earthly possessions for himself; and his servants, as well as himself, were devoted to building the wall. A blessed example, surely, of self-denial and consecration, and one well calculated, as the fruit of the grace of God, to stimulate the godly to follow in his steps, and to rebuke the avarice and covetousness of those who were trading upon their brethren's necessities.

Nor was this all. "Moreover," he adds, "there were at my table a hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us," that is, Jews who were scattered among the other peoples who at that time inhabited Palestine. And the next verse (18) tells us of the daily provision for his table, and of the store of all sorts of wine furnished once in ten days. From this we learn that Nehemiah was given to hospitality, and that he was "not

forgetful to entertain strangers." He had one of the qualifications which the Apostle gives as indispensable for a bishop in the Church of God (1 Tim. 3:2)-a qualification which perhaps is now not so much esteemed as in former days. But it may be questioned whether anything more tends to bind together the hearts of the saints, and thus to promote fellowship, than the exercise of hospitality according to God. The Word of God abounds in examples as well as in commendations of it. It was the special service of one beloved saint, as shown in his description by the Apostle, when he wrote, "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you." (Rom. 16:23; see also 3 John.) The source of its exercise is the activity of grace in the heart, delighting to give and to be made happy in the happiness of others. It is no mean expression of the heart of God. "Yet for all this," Nehemiah adds, "required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people." v. 18. His heart was touched with their condition, and he had learned the lesson that it was more blessed to give than to receive. He thus dispensed bountifully to those that came to him, and seems to have welcomed all.

Nor did he look for any human recompense, but, turning to God in whose presence he walked and labored, he said, "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people." v. 19. It has been often said that this prayer, as others recorded by him, is evidence that Nehemiah moved on a low spiritual platform, as it would have been a far higher thing had he not thought of any recompense at all. It may be so, and, as we have pointed out, Nehemiah certainly had not the simple faith of Ezra. On the other hand, we cannot fail to see in the sketch here given that he was distinguished, in a day of confusion and ruin, by a rare devotedness to the service of his God, by an upright conscience, and by an utter self-forgetfulness, in his intense desire for the glory of God in the welfare of His people. All that he was and had was laid upon the altar, yielded up to God for His use and service, and while it may be admitted that there are loftier prayers than the one here recorded, we prefer to see in it the expression of an earnest desire for the blessing of God in connection with his labors for His people. The Lord Himself said: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." It was in the spirit of this, and knowing the faithful Jehovah he had to do with, that Nehemiah turned away from all thought of selfish advantage to God, in the confidence that He who had wrought in his heart this love for His people, would not allow him to lose his reward. Like Moses, he had "respect unto the recompense of the reward," but it was from God, and not from men.

The Book of Nehemiah

In this chapter Nehemiah returns to his conflicts with the enemy, brought upon him in connection with building the wall of the city. Chapter 5 is therefore really parenthetical, although, as we have seen, it teaches, in its connection with the sixth chapter, an important truth. Nehemiah was engaged in correcting abuses within, and, having been enabled to restore the relationships of the people according to the Word, he resumes his narrative of the activity of the adversary. But though the subject is the same, there is a great difference between chapters 4 and 6. In the former the enemy displayed his opposition; in the latter he practices subtlety, and seeks to decoy under the guise of friendship, rather than to deter by the exhibition of his power. We shall accordingly find traces of his presence within as well as without. If in chapter 4 he appears as a roaring lion, in chapter 6 he seeks to circumvent by his wiles-the two forms in which he always opposes the people of God. (See Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9.)

The first two verses open out to us the first wile of the adversary. "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates); that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of One." The diligence and perseverance of Nehemiah, overcoming, through the blessing of God, all obstacles, had carried on the work almost to completion. "No breach" was left in the wall, and consequently there was now no covert way of entrance. The doors were still unhung, but these were open to observation, and by these only could the enemies of God's people approach. It was time therefore to put forth their final effort, and they accordingly propose a conference, as if they too were interested in the welfare of Israel! But when the servant of the Lord is walking in His presence, and with purpose of heart is pursuing the path of His will, he is never deceived by Satan's artifices. Thus it was with Nehemiah, and hence he adds, "But they thought to do me mischief." He knew that darkness could have no communion with light, that Satan could not contemplate with pleasure the progress of the Lord's work and that, hating his Master, he must hate also His servant. Accordingly he penetrated at once to the heart of the object Sanballat and his companions had in view. Still he "sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" v. 3. When the Lord sent forth His disciples, He charged them to salute no man by the way (Luke 10), that they might learn the absorbing character of His claims; that, when engaged in His service, they had no leisure to turn aside for friendly salutations, but must unwearingly pursue their mission. Nehemiah had therefore the Lord's mind in the answer he sent, apart from his knowledge of the evil nature of their designs. Doing a great work, it was his business to persevere, even if friends had solicited him to leave it, and to leave it but for a moment would cause it to cease. It was impossible-consistent with the claims of his service-for him to "come down." Many of us might with advantage be instructed by the example of this faithful servant; indeed, it would save us from many a snare. The Lord's work, if it be His work, is not to be taken up and laid down at will, but when He puts it into our hands it claims our first and constant attention, and is worthy of all our energies in its accomplishment. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do" (if of the Lord), "do it with thy might."

The enemy was not content to let the matter rest. "They sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner." v. 4. If faithfulness characterized Nehemiah in refusing to go, divine wisdom is equally apparent in the mode of his answer. It was "after the same manner." The circumstances had not changed, and hence his first answer was sufficient. But Satan was practicing upon the weakness of the human heart. He knew that souls are often betrayed by importunity. It was so with Samson. There was as much reason for his refusal to tell his secret at last as at first, but it was when Delilah "pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; that he told her all his heart" (Judges 16). It is often so with ourselves, ignorant as we are, to our shame, of Satan's devices.

Failing to seduce Nehemiah by this plan, another artifice is now tried. "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel," etc. (vv. 5-7). Sanballat affects to be careful of Nehemiah's reputation, and to be fearful lest his proceedings should be misinterpreted! It was a most subtle mask which he assumed, for he

contrives in his letter to insinuate three distinct charges which, if reported to the king, might well endanger Nehemiah's character if not his life. First, he speaks of rebellion, and even adduces a witness-Gashmu, or Geshem, the Arabian. Then he suggests what might, if indeed the first allegation were true, be connected with it, that is, that Nehemiah's object in building the wall was to make himself king. And, finally, he says that it was reported that he had appointed prophets to preach of him in Jerusalem saying, "There is a king in Judah." It is more than likely that there was a show of truth in the last statement. A man so interested as Nehemiah was in his nation would not forget that all their hopes were centered in the promised Messiah. He may have sought, through the ministry of prophets, to revive the flagging energies of the people by recalling to their minds the glowing descriptions of the future kingdom under the sway of the true David, as recorded, for example, in the writings of Isaiah. A stranger could not enter into this or understand it and might well conclude that Nehemiah was sowing sedition and rebellion. The craft of Satan therefore is plainly distinguished in Sanballat's letter. But he had to do with one whose confidence was in God for wisdom as for strength, and hence it was that this attempt upon Nehemiah, like the former, completely failed. His answer is simplicity itself, a plain denial in a few words of the truth of these alleged reports, while at the same time he traced them back to their true source-Sanballat's own wicked heart. "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." v. 8. This answer teaches us that we should never enter into an argument with the tempter; we may repel his accusations, but if we once begin to reason with him, or even to explain, we shall surely be vanquished. If Nehemiah alone had been concerned, it would have been well, but though the leader, and acting for the people, he could not infuse into them his trust in God, and his courage. This will explain his statement: "For they all made us afraid" (the "us" being really the people, Nehemiah identifying himself with them), "saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done." This was Satan's object, to wear out the people by these continued harassing assaults, raining down fiery darts upon them incessantly. Only the shield of faith could intercept and quench these darts and without this shield they could only produce despondency and fear, if not destruction. None knew this better than this faithful and devoted servant, and he knew how to avail himself of the weapons of defense against his artful adversary. Hence, while he maintained untiring vigilance against the enemy, he prayed without ceasing. The enemy had said, "Their hands shall be weakened." Nehemiah prayed, "Now therefore, O God" (these words, "O God," being rightly inserted), "strengthen my hands." Nothing can be more beautiful than the spectacle of this man of God, pressed on every side, turning to God for the needed strength. What could the enemy do with such a man-a man who leaned upon the Almighty God as his defense and shelter? He was powerless, utterly powerless, and he confessed his defeat by changing his front, and proceeding with another wile.

Sanballat, finding the uselessness of these attacks from without, sought in the next place to conspire against Nehemiah from within. "Afterward," says Nehemiah, "I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee." v. 10. Nehemiah was the one obstacle to the enemy's success, and thus the object of all hatred, for amid general unfaithfulness he was faithful-sustained in his path by the grace of his God. And it was on this very account that he found the path a lonely one. He knew there were enemies without, but now he has to discover that professed friends were among his foes. He followed at however great a distance, in the way trodden by our blessed Lord, whose

keen sorrow, on the side of man, was that one of His own disciples betrayed Him. Notice the spiritual subtlety of this last temptation. Nehemiah had paid, it is evident, a visit of sympathy and friendship to Shemaiah, "who was shut up," and his friend, seeming to be under great concern for Nehemiah's life, proposed that they should meet and shut themselves up in the temple for

safety, urging that his enemies would come in the night to slay him. It was an appeal to his fears, and

one apparently dictated by love and friendship, and sanctified by the holy place in which he was urged to conceal himself. But the tempter again missed his mark, or rather his darts failed to penetrate the invincible faith of this upright and faithful servant. "Should," he said, "such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would not go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." What is life to a faithful soldier? The place for a soldier to die is at the post of duty. To flee would have been to deny his true character and to have exposed his followers to the victorious power of the enemy. Through grace Nehemiah was not one to turn his back to the foe in the day of battle, and he thus met the solicitations of his "friend" by resolutely declining his proffered advice. (Compare Psalm 55:12-14.)

It is a remarkable thing, that the moment Nehemiah refused the temptation, he perceived the whole character of the enemy's designs, and, piercing through all his disguises, discovered the evil and hypocrisy that were at work to entrap his feet. It is always so. We are only blinded as long as the temptation is unresisted; when it is refused, all concealment is gone, and Satan stands out fully disclosed. Nehemiah thus says, "And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me; for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach

me." vv. 12, 13. This then was the secret; the

enemy's gold had corrupted the prophets of God who warned Nehemiah in the Lord's name when He had not sent them. They could not serve God and mammon, for the moment they took a bribe from the latter they were bound hand and foot at his service, besides disqualifying themselves as the Lord's messengers. What grief of heart it must have been to the faithful Nehemiah to detect the corrupting influences of the adversary within the holy circle of God's people, among those who should have been the mouthpiece of God to His servants. What a contrast to what we read in Ezra: "And with them" (Zerubbabel and Jeshua building the house of God) "were the prophets of God helping them." These prophets- those of the time of Nehemiah-were helping the enemy's, not the Lord's work. Alas, how often has it been so since that day, that those who have occupied the place of prophets, those who profess to be the communicators of God's mind to their fellows, have been in the pay and service of Satan. Even today the most subtle opponents of the truth of God and of building the wall of separation, under the plea of the brotherhood of all men, are found in the pulpits of Christendom.

What, then, was the object of Shemaiah, the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets? It was to ruin the character of the leader of God's people. They desired to make him afraid by destroying his trust in God, and thus to lead him into sin, "that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me." This one faithful man, as we have before remarked, was the

object of all the assaults and artifices of Satan; around his feet the most subtle snares were spread, because if he could only be deceived and overcome, the victory was assured. At this moment, as far as is revealed, the cause of God in Jerusalem depended upon the courage and fidelity of Nehemiah, and hence it was that Satan sought to circumvent him in every possible way. But though wave after wave dashed against him, he stood, by the grace of God, like a rock, and, unmoved by open opposition, his feet were also kept, although pitfalls were dug for him on every hand. God sustained His servant through that uprightness, integrity, and perseverance which are produced alone by a single eye, and by the maintenance of conscious dependence upon divine power. Once again, therefore, the plot failed.

The secret of Nehemiah's strength is shown in the next verse (14). Having unfolded the aims of the prophets, who had been hired by the enemy, he looks upward, and says: "My God, think Thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear." Avoiding all open conflict as useless, he commits the matter to God, like Paul, who says, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." 2 Tim. 4:14. It would be well for us to pay especial attention to these examples. There are many forms of evil which cannot be openly assailed without damage to ourselves and to others, and many evil workers in the Church of God that must be left alone. To attack them would only be to serve the cause of the enemy, but our resource in such circumstances is to cry to God against them; So also we read in Jude that "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." v. 9. May the Lord give us more discernment that we may know how to behave ourselves wisely in our spiritual conflicts.

The reader will remark that, though this chapter is devoted to the exposure of the enemy's stratagems, the work of building the wall was in no wise hindered. The faith and courage of Nehemiah never faltered; and though he had been led to give, for our instruction, a detailed account of the wiles of Satan, we now find that the building must have been pressed forward with undiminished zeal, for he says, "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days." "So" is a remarkable word in this connection. It might mean "in this manner," or "notwithstanding," or "in spite of," according as we take it in its literal or spiritual sense. The rapidity of the execution of the work is a testimony to the energy of the workmen under the guidance of Nehemiah, for "the city was large and great," and to surround it with a wall in fifty-two days was no mean accomplishment, though easily understood when it is remembered that the work was of God, and for God, and that He wrought with the builders. Even the adversaries of Israel were compelled to own this to themselves, for Nehemiah tells us: "And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God." v. 16. They had been so far utterly discomfited, and now, as they "heard" and "saw" that the wall was completed, their hopes were dashed to the ground; for this wall-the safety and security of God's people as long as they maintained it in holiness-was an invincible barrier to the foe. This they knew, and hence "they were much cast down in their own eyes." Surely this description is a shadow of the time of which the psalmist speaks: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by

together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." Psalm 48:2-6.

The last three verses of the chapter are taken up with a description of another form of evil in the midst of God's people, with which Nehemiah had to contend. Now the action proceeded not from Tobiah, but from the nobles of Judah. Evil, shut out by the completion of the wall, now springs up within and seeks to link itself with the evil without. The nobles of Judah entered into correspondence with Tobiah, and indeed they were "sworn unto him," for he was connected with them by a double tie. "He was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah." v. 18. They had therefore allied themselves with an Ammonite, upon whom the curse of God rested (chap. 13:1), in direct disobedience to the word of God (Deut. 7:3), whereby they also denied the truth of the special place they occupied as the people He had chosen for, and separated unto, Himself. This had been the continual source of weakness and corruption among the people of God, for the moment any, like these nobles, enter into relationships with the world, they must be opposed to the ground of separation on which they have been set. In fact it is more serious than that, for James says: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, 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." Jas. 4:4. Solemn but true words. These nobles of Judah were thus the enemies of God, as are all such who desire to be the friends of the world. And notice how they immediately lost all sense of the distinction between God's people and His enemies; for we read that "they reported his [Tobiah's] good deeds before" Nehemiah, and he says they "uttered my words to him." As if good deeds could be done by an enemy of the people of God! They were seeking to prove, as so many do in the present day, that there is no difference after all between saints and the men of the world-that the actions of both are alike good. But what did they thereby prove? They proved only that they themselves had no conception of what was suited to a holy God, and that they, in their own souls, were on the ground of those who knew Him not. What wonder was it that, with such confederates inside the city, Tobiah renewed his attempts upon Nehemiah, sending letters to put him in fear?

We thus see that this devoted man of God had no rest, that he had to wage perpetual warfare against foes within and foes without, but singlehanded as he was, strengthened by his faith in God, he was superior to all the power of the foe. It is a wonderful record, and one that abundantly proves the all-sufficiency of God to sustain His servants, whatever their difficulties or perils in any service to which He calls them. To Him alone be all the praise!

The Book of Nehemiah

There are two things in this chapter; first, the government of Jerusalem, the city of God, together with provision for continual vigilance against the practices of the enemy (vv. 1-4); second, the reckoning of the people by genealogy (vv. 5-73).

We learn from verse 1 that the doors had now been set up "upon the gates" (see chap. 6:1), and that everything in connection with the wall had therefore been finished (chap. 6:15). Following upon this, "the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed"-a most interesting fact thus briefly indicated. The porters, it is almost needless to say, were the doorkeepers, on whom devolved the responsibility of admitting only such as had a lawful claim to enter the city, and of keeping out all who could not show the necessary qualifications to be inside; in other words, they

had authority over the opening and shutting of the doors. They held a most important post, as do also the doorkeepers of the present day. For while it is true, and must ever be insisted on, that every believer-every member of the body of Christ-has his place, for example, at the Lord's supper, the "doorkeepers" of the assembly have the responsibility of asking for the production of the evidence that they are what they claim to be. (See Acts 9:26, 27 Pet. 3:15.) Laxity or neglect in this respect has been productive of the most serious consequences in many an assembly, amounting in some cases to the destruction of all testimony for Christ, and leading to the positive dishonor of His blessed name. It is a matter therefore of the utmost consequence that only faithful and trusted men should do the work of "doorkeepers," especially in a day of common profession, when all alike claim to be Christians.

There were also "singers." Their employment may be gathered from another place. "These are they," we read, "whom David set over the service of song in the house of the Lord, after that the ark had rest. And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order." 1 Chron. 6:31, 32. The psalmist alludes to these when he says, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee." Psalm 84:4. Such was the occupation of the singers-praising the Lord "day and night" (1 Chron. 9:33). It was a shadow of the perpetual employment of the redeemed in heaven (Rev. 5) and a blessed service (if service it may be called) which it is the privilege of the Church to anticipate on earth while waiting for the return of our blessed Lord. (See Luke 24:52, 53.) Last, there were Levites. Of their work it is said, "Their brethren also the Levites were appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God." 1 Chron. 6:48. The gates and doors having been set up, and porters set in their appointed places, the Lord's portion is first thought of in the singers; then come the Levites to perform the necessary service in connection with His house. The very order of the mention of these three classes is thus instructive and shows, at the same time, how jealous Nehemiah was of the Lord's claims upon His people, and how carefully he sought in his devotedness to the Lord's service to acknowledge His supremacy and to yield to Him the honor due to His name.

These things having been arranged, he says: "I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." v. 2. It is not clear from the words themselves whether this description applies to Hanani or Hananiah; but we judge it is to the former, for it will be remembered that it was this same Hanani who was used, with others, to bring the intelligence of the state of the remnant and of Jerusalem, which became, in the hands of God, the means of Nehemiah's mission (chap. 1). Understanding it so, nothing could more distinctly show Nehemiah's singleness of eye in his Master's service. Hanani was his brother, but he appointed him to this post not because he was his brother or a man of influence, but because "he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." In such ways, as well as by the divine directions furnished through the Apostle Paul, the Lord teaches us what should characterize those who take the lead among His people, and especially those who occupy places of promineny or care in government. It is not enough that they are men of gift, or position, or influence, but they should be faithful-faithful to God and to His truth-and they should be distinguished by fearing not men but God, acting as in His sight and upholding the authority of His Word.

Nehemiah himself gave instructions for the exercise of vigilance and care over the city. First, the gates were not to be opened until the sun was hot. As long as darkness reigned, or any semblance of it, the gates were to be shut against "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6), for the night is ever the time of their greatest activity. As a contrast, we read of the heavenly Jerusalem, that "The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:25); that is, they shall stand perpetually open, because evil and the powers of evil will have forever passed away. Then, "while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them." The porters were not to leave their posts or delegate their duties to others, but they themselves, standing by, were to see that the doors were both shut and barred. Many a house has been rifled because the shut door has not been barred, and many a soul has permitted the enemy to gain an entrance because its several "doors" have not been made secure. It was not enough therefore, since the enemy was in question, that the doors of the gates of Jerusalem should be shut; they must also be barred if the enemies were to be kept outside. We learn from this the imperative necessity of guarding the doors, whether of the soul or of the assembly. In the last place, they were to "appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house." Two things of the greatest importance are here indicated. The first is that not a single inhabitant of Jerusalem was exempted from the responsibility of exercising watchfulness over the interests of the city. Every one was to be in his watch. The watch was to be duly ordered, and all were to serve in their turn. Second, every one was to maintain the watch over against his own house; that is, to sum up the two things, all were concerned in keeping watch over the whole city, but

the safety of the city was ensured if each kept watch over against his own house. This is evident, for if the head of every household kept the enemy-evil-out of his house, Jerusalem would be preserved in separation to God. The whole city was necessarily what its several inhabitants made it. Would that this truth were apprehended in the Church of God! The assembly, like Jerusalem, is composed of individuals, of many heads of houses, whatever the intimate bond of union subsisting between the members of the body of Christ, and its state, its public state (if this term is permissible), is simply the state of all. If therefore discipline for God is not maintained in the home, neither can it be in the Church. Laxity in the one sphere produces laxity in the other. Worldliness in the one place will be worldliness also in the other. Hence the Apostle writes, for example, that a bishop must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" 1 Tim. 3:4, 5. It would indeed savor of the boldest presumption for one whose own house was in disorder to arrogate to himself a place of rule in the assembly, and it would at the same time introduce the very evils which were present in his own house. If, on the other hand, the injunction of Nehemiah be attended to—each keeping watch and ward over his own house—the assembly would be the display of order, security, and holiness to the glory of God.

Next follows a note concerning the city itself. "Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." This is undoubtedly a testimony of failure. The work of God for that day was building the walls of the city, and this, as we have seen, had been accomplished through the faith and perseverance of Nehemiah, in spite of difficulties of every kind. The truth of God would therefore now be bound up with the maintenance of the wall, and the first three verses reveal to us the provision made for that end. But Nehemiah now informs

us that though the city was large and great, the people were few therein. Now the testimony for any given day gathers-indeed, true testimony always gathers-to Him from whom it proceeds as its center. Very few then had been gathered to that which went forth through Nehemiah. The trumpet had been blown for the calling of the assembly (Numbers 10), and through grace some had responded to its summons, but the mass of the people, as at the commencement of Haggai's ministry, were absorbed in their own things rather than the things of Jehovah. (See Phil. 2:21.) Moreover, "the houses were not builded" of those that were gathered. This first responsibility had been neglected, and would be therefore a perpetual source of mischief. When the children of the captivity first returned, they began to build their own houses to the neglect of the Lord's house; now when the time had come to build their own houses they neglected this. Such is man and such are the people of God, for when walking as men they are never in communion with the Lord's mind. They that are in the flesh, and the principle applies to the Christian if he is governed by the flesh, cannot please God. If any inquire how in the present day their houses are to be builded, Eph. 5:22 and 6:1-9,

Col. 3:18 and 4:1 will answer the question. It is

to establish the Lord's authority over every member of them, and especially to bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Now that Nehemiah had given the necessary instructions for guarding the city from the intrusion of evil, he proceeds to the ordering of the people. But he is careful to relate that it was not his own thought. He says: "And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. v. 5. This gives us a glimpse into the intimacy of his walk with God. It is "my" God, the One he knew as such in that relationship to himself, which faith and experience alone can recognize (compare 1 Chron. 28:20; 29:2, 3; Phil. 4:19). It is the One in whose presence he so constantly dwelt, that he could instantly discern the thought which He put within his heart. The object in view was to examine the title of the people to be in the place where they were. With the constant commerce going on between them and the enemy, and the alliances they had formed in forgetfulness that the Lord had chosen them out of all the peoples on the earth as His peculiar people, there would doubtless be many who could not show their genealogy, and hence had no claim to be numbered with Israel. Now that the wall was built, and the truth therefore of separation proclaimed, such a mixture within could no longer be tolerated. Those who occupied this holy ground and claimed the blessed privileges of God's house, must have an indefeasible title, and this is the meaning of this next step of Nehemiah. The work in his case was not difficult, for he "found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first." etc. (vv. 5, 6 and following); and by this register it was easy to ascertain whether those within the sacred enclosure of the rebuilt walls or those who might seek admission were all of Israel.

The Book of Nehemiah

Before entering upon this interesting chapter, it may be profitable to point out the place it occupies. Chapter 6 gives the completion of the wall; chapter 7, the provision and means for the security of the city and the reckoning of the people by genealogy, and in chapter 8 we have the establishment of the authority of the Word of God. This order is most instructive. The walls might be built, and the people duly gathered and ordered, but nothing but obedience to the Word could keep them in the

place into which they had been brought, for obedience gives the Lord His place, as also the people their place. It gives the Lord the place of pre-eminence, and the people that of subjection. Obedience is, therefore, the way of holiness, exclusive as it is of everything inconsistent with the Lord's supreme claims. This furnishes a practical lesson that is most important for the Church. The testimony of God gathers souls to Christ on the ground of the one body, but as soon as they are gathered, then it is the responsibility of teachers and pastors to assert the Lord's supremacy in the authority of the written Word, to feed the flock of God with suited nourishment, to build them up on their most holy faith, and thus to fortify them against the arts and devices of the enemy,

We have seen that, in chapter 7 Nehemiah reproduces Ezra 2. The first verse of chapter 8 corresponds with Ezra 3:1. There we read: "And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem;" here it is: "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate." In verse 2 we find that this gathering was also "upon the first day of the seventh month." It is the date that explains, in both cases, the assembly. The first day of the seventh month was the feast of the blowing of trumpets (Lev. 23:24; Numb. 29:1), a figure of the restoration of Israel in the last days, and one that would therefore appeal mightily, where there was any understanding of its import, to the hearts of all true Israelites. Whether in this case the trumpets were blown is not recorded, but the very fact that it is not, is significant. "They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel." When all is in confusion, through neglect of the Word of God, the first thing to be done is not the restoration of feasts, but of the authority of Scripture over the conscience. Instead, therefore, of the blowing of the trumpets, there was a solemn assembly for the reading of the law-the very memory of which seems to have faded away from the people. And it is exceedingly beautiful to notice that Ezra, of whom there is no previous mention in this book, is he to whom they have recourse in the present need. He was "a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel" and one who

In verses 2 and 3 we have the account of the assembly for the purpose of hearing the Word. The congregation was composed of "men and women, and all that could hear with understanding," that is, we judge, all the children who were old enough to comprehend what was read. There was, therefore, no division, but all were together as forming the congregation of the Lord. Thus gathered, Ezra read out of the book of the law "from the morning until midday"-probably not less than six hours. "And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." In ordinary times, it would be impossible to detain the people, then as now, so long with the simple reading of the Scriptures, but when there is a true work of the Spirit of God after a season of widespread declension, the saints always turn afresh and with eager desire to the Bible, and are never weary of reading or listening to the truths which have been used to arouse their souls. Love for the Word of God, with an intense desire to search for its hidden treasures, is always a characteristic of a genuine revival. It is this fact which explains the eagerness of the people in this chapter, on the first day of the seventh month, to hear the reading of the book of the law.

The second and third verses give the general statement, and in verses 4-8 we have the details of this remarkable assembly. In the first place, Ezra, we are told, "stood upon a pulpit" (or tower) "of wood, which they had made for the purpose," the object being, as in modern days, that he might be seen and heard by all the congregation. Six stood beside him on his right hand and seven on

his left hand, and the Spirit of God has caused their names to be recorded for it was a memorable day, and the privilege given to them of standing by Ezra was great. In the next place "Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up." This was no mere form, for the book Ezra opened was the voice of the living God to the people, and they acknowledged it as such by reverently standing. The words it contained had been first spoken by the Lord at Sinai, "out of the midst of the fire," and Israel had trembled before the holy One who spake them, and "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more;" all this could not fail to be recalled by those who now stood before Ezra. They therefore stood up, as in the presence of their God, "and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God;" that is, he gave thanks, or in praying gave thanks to Jehovah. We find this use of the word bless in the New Testament, especially in connection with the paschal feast and the Lord's supper. Thus in Matthew, for example, it is said that "Jesus took bread, and blessed"(26:26), whereas in Luke we read that "He took bread, and gave thanks" (22:19). It is thus clear that bless, when used in this way, has the significance of thanksgiving. (See also 1 Cor. 14:16.) It is the more necessary to point this out, and to insist upon it, from the fact that a mass of sacerdotal assumptions is founded upon the perversion of the words to bless, in the endeavor to prove that the bread and the cup in the Lord's supper must first receive a priestly blessing, or be consecrated. It is maintained, for example, that when Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless," it means the cup which we priests bless. The light of Scripture instantly reveals the unholy character of such priestly trifling with the simple teaching of the Word of God, whereby the saints are shut out from their privileges and deprived of the place of nearness and blessing into which they have been brought on the ground of redemption. (See John 20:17; Heb. 10:19-22.)

At the conclusion of Ezra's prayer, or thanksgiving, "all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." v. 6. It is a striking scene, for the Lord was working in the hearts of His people with power, and hence it was that their very attitude expressed their hallowed reverence. They stood while Ezra prayed, and then, together with their responses of "Amen, Amen,"

All this was preparatory to the work of the day, which was the reading of the law, of which the next two verses give the account. "Also Jeshua, and Bani... and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God, distinctly" (or with an interpretation), "and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." vv. 7, 8.

It must be remembered that the people had dwelt long in Babylon, and that many of them, under the influence of their surroundings, had adopted Babylonish habits and ways, and even the Babylonish tongue. The sacred language, the language too of their fathers, had thus fallen into disuse and had in many cases been forgotten. Then there was another source of confusion. Some of the Jews "had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." Chap. 13:23, 24. It became necessary therefore to cause the people to understand the law, to read it distinctly or with an interpretation, to give the sense, and to cause them to understand the reading. All this is most instructive, and in two ways: first, we learn that assimilation into the world leads to forgetfulness and ignorance of the Word of God; second that the true function of the teacher is to give the sense of the Scriptures, to explain what they mean,

and to cause their hearers to understand their import. There will be also the application of the Word to the state and needs of the people, but even in this, as in the case before us, it will be as guided by the Holy Spirit to the suited portions.

The Word of God was "quick and powerful" in the hearts of the people; it was sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discerned the thoughts and intents of their hearts, for they "wept, when they heard the words of the law." But "Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep." v. 9.

The feast of trumpets was indeed to be "a holy convocation," and because of its typical significance, sorrow was unsuited to its character. Hence we read, "Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob." Psalm 81:1-4. They were therefore to be joyful on this day in communion with the mind of their God. But joy cannot be contained; it of necessity overflows, and hence they were to communicate it to others. "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." v. 10. This order is instructive- communion with the heart of God and then communion with their brethren. The first thing was to have their own hearts filled with the joy of the Lord, then for that joy to well out in blessing to the poor and needy, and thus they would find that the joy of the Lord was their strength.

"So the Levites," we are told, "stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved." The time would soon come for the expression of their sorrow (chap. 9), but now they were to rejoice according to the thoughts of the heart of God for their future blessing. Truly they had need of self-judgment and contrition, but the point is, that this holy day was not suited for these things, and the Lord would have them rise above their own state and condition, and for the moment find their joy in His joy, and in His joy would be their strength. There are many saints who will understand this; when gathered, for example, around the Lord at His table to commemorate His death, there might be many things calling for sorrow and humiliation as to our condition, but it would be losing sight altogether of the mind of the Lord to confess our sins at such a season. It is the Lord's death we there remember and announce, not ourselves or our failures, and it is only as we have His objects before our souls in our being gathered that we enter into and have communion with His own heart. So it was on this first day of the seventh month, and this will explain the action of Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites in restraining the expression of the people's grief.

The people responded to the exhortation of their leaders, and "went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." v. 12. In this way they celebrated the feast according to the mind of God, if without the trumpets. They were not in a right condition for testimony, and thus the first thing was to get themselves right by the application of the Word.

The Book of Nehemiah

The following day there was another gathering, composed of "the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites;" these came "unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law." v. 13. It is beautiful to notice this increasing desire for the knowledge of the Word of God—a sure sign that God was working in their hearts, inasmuch as obedience to it is a necessary expression of the divine life. When thus assembled, they "found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written." vv. 14, 15. Then we are told that "the people went forth," etc.

But it will be seen from Leviticus 23 that the day appointed for this feast of tabernacles was the fifteenth day of the seventh month, so that a 13 days' interval must be placed between verses 15 and 16, as it was on the second day of the month that they found the precept as to the feast (vv. 13, 14). This interval would be occupied with the proclamation of the coming observance of the festival (v. 15), to give the people "in all their cities" the time required to gather themselves together at Jerusalem. When assembled, they proceeded to keep the feast as enjoined in the law; they fetched the branches from the mount "and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim." v. 16. In the next verse we read, that "since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so;" that is, not that they had not kept the feast of tabernacles, for they had done this on their return from captivity (Ezra 3), but that they had not complied with the injunction to dwell in booths during the days of the feast. It was the first time since Joshua that they had made themselves, in this manner, booths of pine, myrtle, and palm branches. This is another proof of the energetic action of the Spirit of God at this moment, leading the people to exact obedience to the Word of their God. It is thereon added, "And there was very great gladness." Joy indeed was also the significance of this feast, millennial joy, for, after the directions concerning the booths, it is written, "And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days."

And during this period they were to dwell in booths, "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." Lev. 23:40-43.

If the reader will consult Leviticus 23, he will see that the feast of tabernacles completes the cycle of feasts, and therefore sets forth the end and the result of all the ways of God with His earthly people. This will be to set them in His grace, now that they have forfeited all under responsibility, in virtue of the work of Christ, in perfect blessing in their own land, after the harvest and the vintage. Joy throughout the perfect period (seven days) will be therefore the appropriate expression of their sense of Jehovah's goodness and grace. But while "gladness" was to characterize the festival, they were to remember the past—their deliverance from Egypt and their pilgrim wanderings in the desert—and thus that redemption through the blood of the passover lamb (for that was the foundation of all God's subsequent actings on behalf of His people) and the relationship to God into which they were consequently brought (I am Jehovah your God) was the source of all the blessing and joy on which they had entered. In the case before us the gladness was but transient, for, in truth, the festival was as yet only prophetic. Still, it might have taught them the

unchangeable verity of God as to all His promises on their behalf; wherever it did so, it would enable them to rejoice in anticipation of this joyful time of blessing which was secured to them by the infallible word of their God.

The whole time of the feast seems to have been devoted-"from the first day unto the last day"-to reading "in the book of the law of God." That was the present felt need, "and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner." (See Lev. 23:36). In the early days of Ezra (chap. 3) restoration of the sacrifices marked the observance of this feast, but here, the re-establishment of the law. Both observances were defective, though according to God as far as they went, for in Ezra there were no booths, and in Nehemiah, as it would seem, no sacrifices. This teaches us one of God's ways in all revivals. One forgotten truth is restored and pressed with power upon the hearts and consciences of His people, a truth necessary for their restoration and preservation in the special circumstances of the moment. Thus the efficacy of the sacrifices was brought into prominence in Ezra 3; here it is the authority of the Word of God. The same thing has been seen again and again in the history of the Church. In the remarkable work of the Spirit of God through Luther and others, the truth of justification by faith alone occupied the foremost place; in another movement, almost within our own days, it was the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth and the second advent of Christ. God has wrought such revivals in every age, for His own glory and for the welfare of His people. But such is the feebleness and folly of the hearts of His people, that they have often turned His mercy toward them into an occasion for self-exaltation. As if unable to retain the truth in its completeness, and missing His mind in the recovery of certain truths, they have often formed themselves into sects for their preservation. There have been but few Epaphrases in the Church who could labor fervently in prayers for the saints that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (see Col. 4:12).

The seven days of the feast having been completed, there was "a solemn assembly, according unto the manner." It was on this day, "the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this," says John, "spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" John 7:37-39. The time had not come for Jesus to show Himself to the world as He will do when the feast of tabernacles is fulfilled, but, meanwhile, having taken His place on high, He would quench the thirst of every thirsty soul that came to Him. Moreover, He would cause, through the indwelling Spirit, to flow forth from such, rivers of living water for the refreshment of those round about them. Another has said, "Observe here that Israel drank water in the wilderness before they could keep the feast of tabernacles. But they only drank. There was no well in them. The water flowed from the rock." The Lord thus would teach the Jews that their feast of tabernacles (John 7:2) was but an empty rite as long as their Messiah had not come, or rather as long as He was rejected (John 1:11).

The Book of Nehemiah

The feast of tabernacles had been observed, and there had been "very great gladness." The last day - the eighth - would fall on the twenty-third day of the month, and thus chapter 9 opens with the day following. Under the searching power of the words of the law, the people had wept, but they were told, "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep." Now, however,

that the days of the festival had run their course, the time had come for the expression of their sorrow - that sorrow which according to God, worketh repentance - and thus it was that, on "the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sack clothes, and earth upon them." v.1. The entrance of God's word had given them light and had shown them the character of their past ways, had set even their secret sins in the light of God's countenance and, smitten in heart and conscience because of their transgression, they were gathered together with all these outward marks of contrition and humiliation. Blessed effect of the Word of God, and the beginning of all true recovery and blessing.

The reality of their sorrow for their sins was proved by their acts: "And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers." There is a reason for the introduction in this place of the word seed. It is to point out that they were a holy people separated unto God, as born of His people Israel who had been redeemed to Himself on the ground of the blood of the passover lamb. They were therefore a "holy seed" (Ezra 9:2; compare 1 John 3:9), and as such were to maintain their holy character. It was therefore a denial of the place into which they had been brought, to "join affinity" with strangers, as well as to break down the barriers which God Himself had set up between them and other peoples. This they now felt, and accordingly they "separated themselves from all strangers." No doubt it was narrowness according to man's thoughts, and in so doing they would surely incur the imputation of uncharitableness, but what did this matter, as long as they were acting according to God? If God sets the feet of His people in a narrow path, it is their part to keep in it if they want to be in the path of blessing.

Next they "stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers." Mark that separation preceded confession. Shown by the Word that they had sinned in associating themselves with strangers, they acted upon what they saw, and then confessed their guilt before God. This is ever God's order. The moment we see condemned by the Word of God

anything we have allowed or are in association with, it behooves us to refuse it or to separate ourselves from it. No circumstances in such a case can justify delay. Like the Psalmist, we should make haste and delay not to keep God's commandments (Psalm 119:60). To confess our sin while cleaving to it is but mockery. They also confessed the iniquities of their fathers, and they did so because the Lord's hand had been upon them on this very account. It was owing to the sins of their fathers that they had suffered captivity in Babylon, and that they now, though restored through the tender mercy of God to their own land, were in bondage to a Gentile monarch. Hence they went down to the root of all the evil and told out before God their Fathers' sins as well as their own. Their humiliation, therefore, on this day was no mere superficial work, but standing before Jehovah, in the light of His presence, they desired to lay bare all the sin and the iniquity on account of which they had suffered chastisement.

In verse 3 we have the details of their occupation in this solemn assembly: "They stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God." The Jewish day was composed of four periods of three hours, commencing at six in the morning. They therefore read the Scriptures three hours and confessed and worshipped three hours. And in what more blessed occupation could they be engaged? Surely they were divinely taught and divinely led in this matter, and by the very fact of its having been recorded, are we not shown the true method of recovery and

restoration in seasons of declension or backsliding? Would that the Lord's people everywhere knew how to gather themselves together in a similar manner, seeking grace to separate themselves from all known iniquity, to confess their sins, to search the Word for light and guidance, and to humble themselves before God! In our present day, complaints of coldness and indifference, or insensibility to our real condition, are heard on every hand, and together with this, signs of abounding iniquity, through the power of Satan, are everywhere apparent. In the example of these children of the captivity we have the divine remedy, the true way of real revival. There may be in some places only two or three who feel the present evils, but let these two or three get together to test themselves and all else by the Word, and to confess their sins and the sins of their fathers and brethren, and they would soon rejoice in God's intervention and deliverance. Our lack of power in this direction is only an evidence of the greatness of our failure, and even if we simply confessed our lack of power to pray, it would be the dawning of hope in many an assembly. May the Lord stir up the consciences of His beloved people, and may He grant that before long there may be witnessed in many a place the spectacle of His saints assembling in true contrition of heart, and trembling at the Word of God, for humiliation and confession before Him.

The remainder of the chapter (vv. 4-38) contains the confession, or at least a portion of it, made on behalf of the people. First, the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, etc., "stood up upon the stairs... and cried with a loud voice unto the Lord their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel." etc., said to the people, "Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever"; then, turning from the people to God, they commenced their praise and confession. The reader will notice that this outpouring of their hearts before God is a recitation of God's ways of grace with His people, combined with the confession of their own continual sin and hardness of heart. On God's part there had been nothing but grace, mercy, and long-suffering, and on their part nothing but sinful ingratitude and rebellion; thus they justified Him, and condemned themselves - the sure mark of a work of grace in repentance, whether in the hearts of saints or sinners. It will be instructive to examine this remarkable prayer.

They ascribe, first of all, blessing and praise to the glorious name of their God and, at the same time, acknowledge that He was exalted above it all. They own His absolute supremacy (v. 5). In the next place, they adore Him as the Creator, not merely recognizing the creatorship of God, but that Jehovah was the Creator. "Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven," etc. (v. 6). The difference is important. There are many, for example, who, willing to own that God was the Creator, would hesitate to confess of the Lord Jesus Christ, that "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made." The natural man might acknowledge the former, but only a true believer could own the latter. Then they pass on to God's action in grace in calling out Abram and in making "a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites," etc.; and they add, "Thou... hast performed Thy words; for Thou art righteous" (vv. 7,8). What a resting place they had found for their souls, even in the faithfulness and righteousness of their God! They had learned that if they believed not, He abode faithful; He could not deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). Peter, in his second epistle, celebrates the same thing, writing "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteous of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Chap. 1:1. There is nothing that a sinner fears more than the righteousness of God, but for the saint it is the immutable foundation on which his soul reposes in perfect peace now that, through the death and resurrection of Christ, grace reigns through righteousness; hence it is that he can rejoice also in the faithfulness of God,

knowing that what He has promised He will also perform. This utterance - "Thou... hast performed Thy words; for Thou art righteous" - is therefore most significant. (Compare Deut. 26:3.)

Redemption is their next theme (vv. 9-11). And observe how it is traced down from the heart of God, for where do they commence? It is, Thou "didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt." These are almost the very words that God Himself employed when He first commissioned Moses. "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt." Exod. 3:7. They thus reached the source whence the blessed streams of grace had flowed, and they proceed after adding, "and heardest their cry by the Red sea" - another manifestation of the heart of God, to narrate His wonder-working power in judgment "upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for Thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst Thou get Thee a name, as it is this day." v. 10. They then speak of the passage through the Red sea, where God threw their persecutors "into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters." They thus recall their redemption by power out of the land of Egypt, and thereon speak of the cloudy pillar and the pillar of fire wherewith Jehovah had led them through the wilderness, for, in truth, He who had redeemed His people out of the hand of Pharaoh, led them forth in His mercy, and guided them in His strength unto His holy habitation (see Exod. 15:13). Next, they recite before the Lord His coming down upon Sinai, the giving of the law, His holy sabbath, the precepts, statutes, and laws which He commanded them by the hand of Moses, and they reminded themselves of the bread from heaven which He gave them for their hunger, of the water which He brought forth out of the rock for their thirst, and of the land which He had promised for a possession. (vv. 13-15).

So far, it is a tale of grace - of a giving God. He had chosen Abraham, redeemed His people, guided, spoken to, and sustained them. All had been given from the heart of God, in His own pure and sovereign grace. They turn, in the next place, to their side of the picture. And what a contrast, as it ever is, when the heart of man is put side by side with the heart of God! What then had they to tell of themselves in the presence of all this mercy and grace? Not one single good thing, for they say, "But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks," etc. (vv. 16,17). They confessed pride, stubbornness, willful disobedience, forgetfulness of the displays of God's power in their midst, and apostasy. On God's side there had been mercy, long-suffering, and tender care; on theirs, ingratitude, and almost every form of evil and corruption.

And yet they have more to tell of the inexhaustible goodness of the God who had redeemed them, borne them on eagles' wings, and brought them unto Himself. "But Thou," they say, "art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not." Moreover, they have further to say as they magnify the grace of their God, that though their fathers had made a molten calf as their god, even ascribing to it their deliverance from Egypt, "and had wrought great provocations; yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness." No; God had still guided them by His pillar of cloud by day, and His pillar of fire by night. He withheld not His manna, nor the water out of the rock, but for forty years He sustained them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; "their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not." Moreover, He subdued kingdoms before them, multiplied their children, put them into the land which He had promised to their fathers, gave them victory over all the power of the enemy, and enabled them to take strong cities and a fat land, to possess "houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and olive yards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in Thy great goodness" (vv. 9-25). They celebrate

in this manner the unchanging goodness of their faithful God, and measure by it the conduct of their fathers and themselves. For what response did they render to all this grace? "Nevertheless," they say, "they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great provocation." v. 26. The reader will notice the repetition of this last clause. They "wrought great provocations" both in the wilderness (v. 18) and in the land.

This was what God found in the people He had redeemed as the answer to all His patient care and goodness, and henceforward a change is marked in God's dealings with them, for they next proceed to narrate His judgments upon His people, yet confessing that He was ever ready to interpose for their succor and deliverance. "Thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and according to Thy manifold mercies Thou gavest them saviors, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies." Again, they tell of sin - and evil. "Yet when they returned, and cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst Thou deliver them according to Thy mercies." (vv. 27,28.) To these interpositions in grace, in answer to His people's cry, were added testimony against them, forbearance and warnings by prophets, "yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto Thy commandments... and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear... therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands." vv. 29,30.

Such were the causes of their present condition, but they add to the praise of their God: "Nevertheless for Thy great mercies' sake Thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for Thou art a gracious and merciful God." Again we say, What a tale! It is, as we said before, the revelation of the heart of God and of the heart of man, but it is also the revelation of the heart of man under divine culture, the object of sovereign mercy and love. Jehovah had been seeking fruit from His fig tree all these centuries, and by His own people's confession He found none. Still with unwearied grace, He had borne with them in His infinite long-suffering and patience, and the age to come will tell out even more fully the depths of His mercy toward His beloved people when, in spite of all they have been and are, and although they have forfeited all by their sin and apostasy, He will restore them once again to their land; and maintain them in it in the perfection of blessing under the reign of their Messiah. Such are the counsels of His grace already disclosed in and through the death of Christ - counsels which Christ Himself will accomplish in power when He appears in glory to take the kingdom of His father David, and to wield His scepter from the river to the ends of the earth.

Having then passed in review the history of God's ways with them since the call of Abram, they now present their prayer. Indeed their rehearsal of the past may be said to be the foundation of their special petition, for they have grounded themselves upon the immutable character of their God, as "gracious and merciful," according to the revelation He had made of Himself after the sin of the golden calf (Exod. 34:6). They had owned that they deserved nothing but judgment, and had therefore confessed that they had no hope but in God Himself. They had thus reached an immovable foundation on which to rest their plea - the heart of their God.

And what was their petition? They say: "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before Thee, that

hath come upon us, on our kings... of Assyria unto this day." v. 32. Such was their prayer. It was the presentation of their own sorrowful condition under the chastising hand of their God, leaving it, as it were, to Him (for they knew that they deserved nothing but judgment) to deal with them according to His own character as "a gracious and merciful God." For they proceed to say, "Howbeit Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." v. 33. Again in their utter abasement before God at this moment, they confess the sins of their kings, their princes, their priests, and their fathers, owning that they had not kept the law, that they had not hearkened unto His commandments and His testimonies, and that even in the kingdom which He had given them, as well as the large and fat land, they had not served Him, nor turned from their wicked works (v. 35). They describe, furthermore, their present position in the land, and surely, in contrast with the past, it is a touching picture, and one, as delineated by the Holy Spirit, that could not fail to awaken a response in the heart of Him to whom it was presented. They are servants, they say, and instead of eating the fruit and the good of the land which God had given their fathers, they were servants in it, and its increase went to the kings whom God had set over them because of their sins; these also had dominion over their bodies and their cattle "at their pleasure, and we are in great distress."

Such is the way in which these children of the captivity poured out their sorrows before Jehovah. They justify God in all His dealings with them, and they magnify His grace, mercy, and long-suffering toward them. They take also the place of true self-judgment, for they vindicate God against themselves, not seeking in any one thing to extenuate their own conduct. No, He was just in all that was brought upon them; He had done right, and they had done wickedly. In such a place - a place which it ever behooves sinners, and saints too when they have sinned, to take - and in such a dispensation, their only refuge was in the mercy of their God. And it was upon this that they cast themselves - unreservedly cast themselves - admitting again and again that they had no claim except indeed upon what God was toward them. And it would have been well if they had left themselves there, if they had rested alone upon their merciful and gracious God. But they went further, and they said: "Because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it." v. 38. The question, however, of the covenant which they made really belongs to the next chapter, for it is there we find its terms and what the people with their leaders solemnly engaged to perform.

The Book of Nehemiah

At the close of the last chapter a covenant is made, and at the commencement of this the names are given of those who sealed it; that is, of those who bound themselves to its observance by their signatures, but subscribing their names, it would seem, not only for themselves, but also on behalf of the people. Nehemiah, as the governor, was the first to put his name to this solemn document; he was followed by twenty-two priests (vv. 1-8), then came seventeen Levites (vv. 9-13), after whom there were forty-four chiefs of the people, probably heads of families.

The nature of the covenant is seen in what follows: "And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinim, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; they clave to their brethren, their

nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes." vv. 28,29. There can be no doubt that there was a general movement in the hearts of the people, and that this covenant-making was no mere formal act, for while the "nobles" had signed it on behalf of all, there was an evident concurrence in their deed from the fact of all classes coming spontaneously forth to ratify what was done. Even the wives and children, at least those who had knowledge and understanding, participated in the act and deed.

And what was it that they engaged to do? The very thing that Israel had undertaken when standing before Sinai, where, under the sanction of the sprinkled blood, they solemnly said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." (Ex. 24.) Up to that time, since their redemption from the land of Egypt, they had been under grace. God had borne them on eagles' wings and brought them unto Himself. Grace had set them free; they were to stand still and see the salvation of God: and grace had sustained, provided for, borne with, and guided them until that moment. But when they came to Sinai, to bring out what was in their heart, the Lord sent through Moses this message to His people, "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." (Exod. 19:3-5) They accepted the proposed condition with the penalty of death, as proclaimed by the sprinkled blood, attached to transgression (Exod. 19 and 24), and henceforward they were on a new footing and relationship with God.

Already they were God's people by redemption, and now, in utter forgetfulness of the history of the three months which had elapsed since they crossed the Red sea, of their continual sins, they expressed themselves ready to abandon the ground of grace, and to accept that of responsibility. They had sinned at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, and at Rephidim, and God had borne with them in long-suffering mercy, according to the ground on which He had set them, meeting their murmurings with new displays of His grace, and ever strewing their path with fresh blessings. What folly then to enter into the covenant of law which was proposed to them at Sinai! Had they known themselves, had they understood the past, had they but reflected, they would have said, "Thou in Thy mercy, Lord, hast led forth Thy redeemed people; Thou hast hitherto undertaken all for us, while we have been continually guilty of sin and hardness of heart. We are thine, and Thou must keep us, for if we are left to ourselves, or if anything is made dependent on us and on our doings, we shall lose everything. No, Lord, we are debtors only to Thy grace, and to Thy grace we must be debtors still." But in their ignorance of their own hearts, in the folly of the flesh, they accepted the covenant with all its solemn sanctions and penalties. And what happened? Before even the tables of the law had reached the camp, they had apostatized from Jehovah, and had made the golden calf, before which they fell down, saying "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (Exod. 32:1-4.) Thus having received all under grace, they forfeited everything under responsibility.

Take yet another example. After the reign of wicked Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood "from one end to another," and who seduced the people "to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel," Josiah succeeded to the throne. He was characterized by obedience to the Word, and, in his desire to reclaim the people from their evil ways, he "made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to

perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant." 2 Kings 23:3. But even while with their lips they "stood to the covenant," they did it "in falsehood" (Jer. 3:10; margin), and soon even outwardly were worse than ever.

These examples will enable us to estimate the value of the covenant which Nehemiah, with the people, made at this time. They were not ignorant of the past (chap. 9:13, 14), and they had confessed the former transgressions of their people; yet they now make another covenant, blinded by the enthusiasm of the moment to the fact that as their fathers were, so were they, that there was no more probability of their observing these solemn engagements than in the case of their ancestors. And yet they were doubtlessly sincere, fully purposing to be faithful to the obligations they were undertaking. There are few indeed who cannot understand this transaction, for the flesh is naturally legal, and it seems an easy method of providing against failure to make a covenant. God's people have often resorted to this expedient, only to discover their own utter impotence, and thus they have been in many cases, taught to look to Another for the power they needed instead of to themselves. It is easy to pass condemnation, whether upon Nehemiah or others, but it is better to learn from their example, for it is a necessary stage in the history of souls, and blessed are they who, whether by this or any other process, have come to the end of themselves, have ceased to expect anything from their own promises or effort, and have learned that in their flesh there dwelleth no good thing, and that while to will is present with them, how to perform that which is good they find not.

There were three main articles in the covenant to which they bound themselves by a curse and an oath. First, they engaged to keep the whole law as given to their fathers at Sinai, as well as all the Lord's commandments, judgments, and statutes. Second, they declared that they would contract no more marriages with the heathen, and last, that the sabbath, the holy days, and the seventh year (see Deut. 15), with its accompanying conditions, should be faithfully observed. (See Exod. 21; 23 etc.) In addition to this, they made obligatory ordinances to secure provision for the service of the house of God, for the sacrifices, and for all that appertained to their religious observances. Though in weakness, and in bondage to the Gentiles, they desired to order everything connected with Jehovah and His claims according to what had been enjoined upon them in the law of Moses. Every one was, in the first place, to contribute the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of God. As far as can be discovered from the Scriptures, there was no legal precedent for this voluntary assessment. In connection with the erection of the tabernacle, it was ordained that whenever the children of Israel should be numbered, "every one that passeth among them that are numbered" should give half a shekel, "to make an atonement for your souls"; and this money was to be appointed "for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls." (Exod. 30:11-16.) This no doubt suggested the annual contribution before us, lessened probably to a third of a shekel on account of their poverty (chap. 9:37). In after years it was raised to half a shekel and became a tax upon every Jew. It was concerning this that the collectors asked Peter, "Doth not your master pay tribute?" (Matt. 17:24-27.)

It is beautiful, whatever the after failure, to see the hearts of these poor returned captives flow out in love to the house of their God, that He might be honored, and that they might have their standing before Him through His own ordinances in the sanctuary. Thus the money contributed was to be expended in the provision for the continual showbread which, composed as it was of

twelve loaves, represented the twelve tribes of Israel in association with Christ and before God - God Himself revealed in Christ in association with Israel in the perfection of governmental administration. From this fund was to be defrayed also the cost of the continual meat offering, the continual burnt offering in their appointed seasons, "and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God." v. 33. Every kind of offering - representing Christ in His devotedness of His life, His perfect humanity, Christ in His devotedness unto death for the glory of God, and Christ as the sin bearer - was to be provided and offered for Israel. The children of the captivity were but few, but they were on the ground of the whole nation before God, and hence they included in their thoughts the whole of Israel, and they showed by caring for the sacrifices that it was only in and by the efficacy of these that this ground could be secured and maintained. This is evidence of divine intelligence, revealing a true appreciation of Jehovah's claims as well as of the only possible ground on which they themselves could stand before Him.

They proceeded, in the next place, to "cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law." v.34. It was necessary that this provision should be made, for the fire on the altar was never to go out. (See Lev. 6:8-13.) On this account, they selected priests to attend to the altar, Levites to wait upon the priests in this service, and some of the people to bring the needful supplies of wood for the holy fire. All was to be duly ordered and cared for, "as it is written in the law." They had begun to understand that God's thoughts must govern in God's things. The first fruits of their ground, and the first fruits of all fruit of all trees, were also to be annually brought to the Lord's house. They desired, therefore, in accordance with the precepts of the law, to honor the Lord with their substance and with the first fruits of all their increase, in recognition of Him from whom the increase of the field proceeded, and to whom all belonged. They could not enter, as we can into the blessed typical teachings of the first fruits, but Christ as the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:23) was before the eye of God, and invested the offerings of His people with all His value and preciousness. (Lev. 23:9-21; see also Jas. 1:18.)

They promised, furthermore, to bring the firstborn of their sons, of their cattle, of their herds and flocks to the house of their God, unto the priests that minister in the house of their God (see Ex. 13; Luke 2:22-24). In this they acknowledged themselves as a redeemed people, for when "the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast," He commanded His people to sacrifice to Him "all that openeth the matrix, being males," but enjoined them to redeem the firstborn of their children. We thus read: "All the firstborn of the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself." Numb. 8:17. The restored remnant reverted to this ordinance in the grateful recollection that they had been brought up out of the land of Egypt, and in recognition of what was due to Jehovah their redeemer.

The last three verses concern the first fruits and the tithes. The Levites were given unto Aaron, in the place of the firstborn, to be offered "before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord." Numb. 8:11. All the work of the house of God, except the strictly priestly duties devolved upon them, and provision was made for their support in the tithes imposed upon the people. Both the priests and the Levites were to be sustained by the

offerings of the people, the character of which had all been duly prescribed (see Numb. 18). All this is now remembered, and the people, in their zeal for the restoration of the law, charge themselves with the observance of their responsibilities in this matter that the service of the house of their God might be duly established. The first fruits for the priests, as well as the tithes for the Levites, were to be stored in the chambers of the house. (1 Chron. 9:26-33).

It will thus be perceived that the covenant, embracing in its terms all that the people on this day engaged to do included what was due to God and to His house. They put themselves under the solemn obligation to meet all God's claims upon them personally, to maintain a holy separation from the nations around, to keep the sabbath - the sign of God's covenant with them, etc. - and in addition to this, they undertook the burden of caring for all that appertained to the establishment and support of the service of the Lord's house. They concluded the latter part of the covenant therefore with the words, "And we will not forsake the house of our God." Nor can we doubt the sincerity of their intentions. Assembled together, they were for the time one in heart and aim, and their common desire and purpose found expression in this covenant. But it is one thing, as all know, to vow, and another to perform. When wrought upon by some mighty influence which isolates us from everything but the one thing then presented to our souls, it is easy to bind ourselves to pursue that one object forever. The influence passes away and, while the object which had been before us seems as desirable as ever, the impulse to its attainment is no longer felt. Together with this loss of power, the flesh reasserts itself, and finally the "covenant" which, at the time we made it, seemed so easy to keep, becomes impossible and adds another burden to an already bad conscience. All this the Jews will discover in time. Meanwhile they sketched a beautiful covenant which, if duly observed, would produce a perfect state, and they added an attractive resolution not to forsake the house of their God.

One Hundred Years Ago: Excerpts From Letters 1884

Note: In the year 1884 the following excerpts from letters were written from Beirut, Syria. The writer was B.F. Pinkerton from Springfield, Illinois who went as a missionary to labor for the Lord in Syria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia.

"It is a mighty gap from the dark and Satanic system of Islam into Christianity.... It is very different from the case of a professing Christian who is not real, although the remedy in both cases is the same. for it is Christ. But in the former case you have no Christian foundation to build upon. So far as a missionary's work is concerned, all must be new. You dare not take a single thing, even seemingly good, of his old system, for it is Satanic. The Koran is to us an unclean book, whose authority we dare not admit, even as a witness... I would not quote a single sentence from it as a means of dealing with souls.

"I was puzzled, for a good while, to find some line of truth to meet the state of mind amongst Christians. If you ask a man here, Are you a Christian? he says, 'Yes, thank God, I am a Christian.' And he will go on talking as piously as you please. What I finally struck upon was very simple. I say, 'Well, my friend, if you should die today, where would you go to?' He replies, 'If my works are good, I should go to heaven; if bad, to hell.' I take him up on that, and insist to know how he estimates his works, if they have been of such a nature as to entitle him to go to heaven at once. It finally comes out that his works are not good. Well, I tell him that he would certainly go to hell, according to his own reasoning. We then go on to the question of man's works, as measured by the law, and from that to Christ.

"Once I was spending a few days in Ramleh, Palestine. People were coming and going. A man of some intelligence came in, and asked me if it were true that the English were going to make a railway from Joppa to Jerusalem. I told him I did not know. 'Well,' he said, 'it would be a great blessing, and make business good,' etc. 'Well,' I said, 'we may die before it is completed, and what then?' He replied at once, 'That would be far better, for then we should go to Christ.' His remark being unusual, it struck me, and I thought I would probe it. I replied, 'Certainly being with Christ would be far better than remaining here. But will you kindly tell me how the like of you and me can attain such a great blessing?' Again he replied promptly, 'By faith and works.' I asked, 'It is by faith and works?' 'Yes,' he repeated, 'faith alone will not do.'"Well, now,' I said, 'my friend, we must look into the matter; for if our getting to heaven depends partly on our faith, and partly on our works, we must look out that our works are of the proper kind and quality. We must have the right measure for them.' He replied, 'They must be measured by the law of God.' I said, 'You are, doubtless, right; for if any part of our getting to heaven rests on our works, they must be according to God's law. Well, this law says we must love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourself.' 'Just so,' he replied. 'Now,' I said, 'we will admit that part that speaks of love to God, and look into the matter of love to our neighbor. If your house were on fire, and that of your neighbor at the same 'time, you will throw one jar of water on the fire in your own house, and the next on the burning in your neighbor's. If you receive one pound, you will divide it with your neighbor,' etc. He

was astonished, and said, 'Well, if that be true, hell is nearer to us all than heaven;' and bade me good-day; and I saw no more of him.

"A talk of this kind never fails to gain the attention of nominal Christians here, but would have no effect whatever on a Mohammedan.... The god the Mohammedan talks about is not the true God at all. His creed is, There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is the apostle of Allah. That is, the god he owns has spoken and revealed himself by Mohammed. But this is not the God I know. Many Protestants seem never to have doubted that Mohammedans own the true God, but are only mistaken in their way of worshipping Him.... The god Mohammed speaks of has neither holiness, love, truth, justice, or any other of the true attributes of God.

"There are many here who are instructed in the dark acts of Satan. One, who says he is Christ, wrote me a letter last year. It was inspired by Satan, and wonderfully adapted to deceive. I burned it. He referred to little things, known only between God and my soul, and I am sure he could only have referred to them by Satanic inspiration."

When we remember the above extracts refer to those very lands where the gospel was first preached - Palestine, Syria, and Egypt - surely there is much room for grave reflection.

And if this Satanic flood of apostasy and iniquity rolls over those favored lands, is not a still worse apostasy foretold, soon to cover the whole of the restored Roman empire? (Rev. 13.) And yet men talk about wonderful days of progress! It is a terrible thing to give up Christ, no matter what may be accepted in His place. The wickedness and darkness of those lands should be a solemn warning to us. May we be aware of his wiles.

Oh, fellow Christians, was there ever a time when we had greater need to cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart? Are there not also many in these favored lands in the same uncertainty and ignorance of a finished redemption, and justification by faith, as the nominal Christians of Syria? Is that your state, beloved reader? Are you nearer to heaven, or hell? Has God proclaimed to you forgiveness of sins through Jesus, and are you uncertain that God speaks truth to you? Do we hear you saying, No, I believe God, I believe that blessed message proclaimed to me. Then we hear God saying, Thou art justified from all things. (Acts 13:38, 39)

Beirut, Syria; July 1884

"We had a short visit last week from our brother S., who was on his way to the interior, to make a visit to the brethren at Deir Mimas. He had recently been on a tour in the direction of Bethlehem and Jerusalem, finding, here and there, some souls glad to get a book, or a tract, and to hear some words about the Lord. He has been greatly delighted with the translation of Mr. Bellet's Son of God, and has taken three hundred copies of it to distribute. It is a book that brings the Person of the Lord before the soul with peculiar power, and I believe it will be a blessing to many. The Syrian Bishop of Jerusalem, with whom our brother is personally acquainted, was very glad to receive a copy of it, and some other books, I believe. I may remark, that it is often refreshing to us to meet persons in these old churches who really have faith in the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son of God, who suffered, and died, and rose again, and sat down on the right hand of God.

"As an illustration of the way in which light and blessing are scattered, even when we know nothing about it, I will tell you about a man from Mesopotamia who called on me a short time ago. He had

obtained this book in his own country, and read it with blessing. Last winter he started with a drove of horses for the Egyptian market - a long distance by land. He brought with him a half-dozen copies of his favorite book, to distribute by the way. He had given all away before reaching Damascus, and expected that he might find more there, but was surprised, when reaching there, to find that the Christians, whom he asked, knew nothing about it. And thus it is, brother, everywhere. Books and tracts you may have written may carry joy and blessing to souls in India, or in Western America, and your neighbors who live within a stone's throw, may never have seen them, or cared aught for them.

"When speaking of books, there is one book I ought to mention, and that is the Word of God, of which we have a good translation in the Arabic - on the whole, it is the finest one I know. The British and American Bible Societies have printed Bibles and Testaments, and scattered them in all directions, almost in such abundance as the leaves of the forest. How thankful we should be that God, in His providence, has multiplied the copies of His Word in so many languages. But, at the same time, there is a very solemn thought that comes to the mind in connection with this fact. The darkness of the middle ages was dense indeed, but there were no Bibles! The darkness of Christendom in our day is increasing and deepening on every hand, while Bibles are available everywhere. If people will go on in darkness, it is because they love it. Hence they have no excuse. Before Luther's day it might have been said, 'True, the darkness is great, but men have no means of light.' As a matter of fact, when the Word of God was preached at that time, thousands accepted it, and got light. But what shall we say of the state of things now? Men translate and publish the Word of God, and scatter it broadcast in the earth, while they themselves are in darkness, all the while claiming 'we see.' What new remedy can we devise? We can devise no other. As J.N.D. remarks somewhere, 'For a gospel definitely revealed, and rejected, there is no gospel.' " Your brother in Christ,

Our Hope

"In My Father's house are many mansions.... I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2. It was in His Father's house, the place that He occupied as Son, where He was at home; there He was going to prepare my place. This is unspeakable blessing! It was a comfort, a joy to have Christ with them in the world, but that was by the way. He was going to prepare a place where He was at home. Think what the home of such a heart as His must be, where all His divine affections would flow out, the divine Son, and yet a Man, and to think that this is the place where He is going to take us. What a wonderful thing! What a home must that be!

"I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." Not call you up; that would not do. Not send for you; that would not do. But, "I will come." How touching! Though gone into glory and sitting on His Father's throne, He would leave it to come and fetch us into His Father's house. His affections are so set on us that He is not satisfied without coming Himself for us; He would not send. It is not only the blessedness to us of His coming Himself for us, but it is the expression of Christ's heart. He wants it-wants to have us. It is His own interest in us-His love to us. When we know that, then the heart is drawn out to Himself. No doubt it is an unspeakable blessing to us, but it is the revelation of Christ Himself. The one and only blessed hope of the Church is that He would come again and fetch us. Confidence is sure that when we are unclothed we shall be with the Lord-"Absent from the body... present with the Lord," Yet that is not the hope; the hope is that He will come and fetch us. It is on His heart and should be on ours. They went out to meet the Bridegroom; that was the condition of the Church at the first. Converted to wait for His Son from heaven, they all went to sleep, wise as well as foolish, and had to be waked by the midnight cry. It was, "My lord delayeth his coming," that brought deadness into the Church, that led to the eating and drinking and drunkenness and beating the men-servants and maid-servants.

This is no truth that may or may not be held. It is essential to the daily life of the Christian. If I am daily expecting Christ, I shall not like to be in any place where I would not like Him to find me, and whatever would not please Him, I should put off, whatever it is. We are looking for One who loves us. His heart wants us, and He is going to satisfy His heart. It is not prophecy; prophecy has to do with God's government of this world, and it is very interesting in its place, but it has nothing to do with our hope.

Our Place in Politics

When political campaigns wax hot and the world is besieged with claims and counterclaims, the Christians who are conscious of their heavenly calling can go on serenely, knowing that men are merely working out "whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." Even though Satan is the god and prince of this world, and is blinding the minds of those that believe not, God is still supreme and is moving behind the scenes to work out His own purposes and counsels. These may not be what men think are best, but we must remember that this world, as it now is, is not going on to a bright future but to certain trouble, the like of which will never have been known before. It is guilty of casting the Son of God out and has not repented of its deed; God's righteous judgments hang over it ready to begin to fall when the true Christians are taken out.

What a mistake it is for real Christians to think that they can improve this doomed scene by political means. When the Lord Himself was here, He did not try to improve it; He refused to be a judge between two brothers, to remove an iniquitous Herod, or to stop a wicked Pilate. He left this world as He found it, except that when He left it, it was guilty of rejecting Him. Can we suppose that we are to do what the Lord did not do? Have God's thoughts about the world changed? He sent His Son into the world to testify for Him, and in the same manner the Son has sent us into the world.

How thoroughly unlike Christ it would be for a Christian to help select or to wield political power.

Christ is the heir of this world and we are joint heirs with Him; shall we, the joint heirs, have a place here before the Heir does? We are but followers of the rejected One, waiting for the moment when He will take us home. Our position is much like that of the Israelites who were sheltered by the blood of the lamb in Egypt under divine sentence, while they themselves were awaiting the command to depart. How incongruous it would have been for those Israelites to be absorbed in Egyptian politics, or to help to improve that doomed land!

The Christian is bound to respect all who are in authority, and to treat them as established by God, but at the same time to pass on as a stranger and a pilgrim. His home is elsewhere; he is but passing through. He is here to represent One who is in heaven - to manifest Christ and His ways, which were always full of grace and truth. It would be as completely out of place for a Christian to mingle in earthly politics as for the British ambassador to Washington to become entangled in American politics.

One writer has translated Phil. 3:20 thus: "Our politics are in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." How comforting! How encouraging! The sense of this should free us from all participation, and even from all anxiety in any political agitation regardless of how or where. Soon we shall hear that shout and be off to meet our Lord in the air. May we be found feeding on Christ the "roast lamb" who underwent the judgment for us, and by whose precious blood we are girded (shoes on the feet and the staff in the hand) ready to depart. (See Exod.

12:8-12)

The Path of Peace: a Word for Troubled Souls

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Psalm 23:2.

Beside the still waters! What a place to lie in, beloved, in this world of trouble, of unrest, of aching, restless hearts! What fullness of meaning for the pilgrim's heart! The Shepherd has led many through this valley and shadow of death-led through this dry and thirsty land by an unseen hand, and supplied from an unseen source-many whose hearts have known the meaning of Peter's words, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Such is the sweet portion of those who, if need be, are in heaviness, through manifold temptations, for the trial of their faith.

Are you in trouble? Are your goods not increased enough? Do your friends lightly esteem you? Have you fears for tomorrow? Are you in debt, or sick, or bereaved? Is the thing come upon you which you feared? Is the Lord's hand heavy upon you so that though you might otherwise trust, yet now you must plan and scheme for yourself, hoping to trust when things are easier?

O beloved for whom Christ died, for whom God gave His Son, by those very trials, sore as they may be, and the full measure of which God knows and has meted out to you, He is, in infinite love, opening a way for you of deepening joy; Satan would only enlist your doubts and fears to close it against you. To whom will you yield yourself, beloved of God? Which path will you walk in, that of faith or sight? "While we look not at the things which are seen," says Paul. So he could say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment."

The language of faith is always brave language because God is trusted and things seen do not occupy the mind. What trouble or perplexity or distrust is there that does not belong to things seen? Can you name one? Here is just the struggle, and what a momentous one, that is going on in each of us. Shall I look up or down; shall I give all attention to my troubles, or give heed to the Shepherd's voice? Shall I trust God who has saved me, or let Satan overwhelm me and drive me into the path of one who knows he is saved, but has lost communion, and is without "heart" or energy? There are trials in the path of faith, but the trial is the door to lessons of joy and peace in Christ. Do not shrink back at the entrance. He Himself, for the joy that was set before Him, endured =the cross. "Surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off." Pro. 23:18.

What were the things that men saw Paul passing through? They are' recorded in 2 Corinthians 4-"Troubled on every side," etc. Would nature have chosen them or gone through them? Might he not have chosen an easier path? How many have done so, but what a choice! Before Paul's eye there opened up, not the fear of fresh trials in the future, but the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the presence of Him who had chosen him. And this is how we make our calling and election sure; the heart gets familiar with the prospect of glory and then the aged warrior can say, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded -that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

The trials are not to keep you from the still waters, but to bring you beside them in companionship with the Shepherd; they mark the way to glory. If trouble has taken away your happiness in the Lord, on what was your happiness based? Ask yourself, what is it that you want, that the heart is not quiet. Would its attainment restore the soul? Never. It is Satan who would tell you that. Be sure the place of quiet and refreshment is not found in that way. It is found by a shorter, quicker path, by a broken heart in the very circumstances in which you are. The Shepherd is waiting for that. His voice is calling. You do not need to take counsel with a friend or with your own heart, but bow down the proud heart before the Word of God-that Word so full of perfect and sweet assurance for faith against any day of evil, such an answer to every doubt, such a shield against the enemy's darts. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

Then the song will be raised, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." The lessons of trial (they may be bitter) have taught the soul this sweet confidence, and a personal relationship is recognized between the individual and the Lord. It is not "the Lord is the Shepherd," as He is for all, but I have learned with delight that He is my Shepherd. It is not dry argument or reasoning, but a sweet assurance made good in the depth of the heart. What a refuge for the soul! The Lord-the Almighty-is my caretaker. It is true that it is in weakness we have to learn this trust, for trusting is acknowledged weakness, and that we shrink from. The flesh cannot do it, but when the lesson is learned, and the heart submissive and content to trust, what a source of strength the child of God has! What comparison between human and divine power! How infinitely strong the weakest child of God whose trust is in God! Do we realize it? Inasmuch as we do, peace, ineffable peace, dwells within, which changing circumstances cannot destroy.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.... In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isa. 26:3, 4.

What comparison is there between trust in horses and chariots, and in the living God? Are your circumstances such as you cannot trust in or get comfort in? Then know that the Lord is hedging you in that you may be forced to look up, since you cannot see over or through the difficulty. What if it hurts your pride and disappoints your expectations and upsets your plans; the Lord has a better thing for you. Think then of the love that patiently deals with us. We distrust Him, but He does not rest until He has opened our eyes to see His love. How wicked often is our unbelief when we only deem ourselves tried sufferers.

It is a great thing to be persuaded of the Lord's love. What a portion for the heart! The Lord of heaven and earth loves me. This indeed fills the heart and gives quietness every moment. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Because He loved me, He gave Himself for me. The springs are in Himself. I may forget myself then-it is no question of my faithfulness or of what I deserve-and dwell upon His love alone.

Let us not seek then to walk by sight; let us not be wearied of faith. To faith all is bright; the feet stand firm upon the solid, everlasting basis of God's promise, and we take heed to the word, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Heb. 10:36. So long then as we are in this life, we remain so by "the will of God." Is there anything then we cannot sub it to, seeing it is His will? His will, whose will Christ did when he came and died for us on the cross. The trouble is only for a little while, "For yet a little while, and He that shall

come will come, and will not tarry." Heb. 10:37. "Now the just shall live by faith"-a path which He Himself walked until the end, and in which He leads us by the hand-a sweet companionship. Beloved, He it is who leads, not we, and He it is who restores the soul. Not one bit of worry belongs to you, but let the heart be free to enjoy His love and speak His praise.

"Our Shepherd is the Lord,

The living Lord, who died;

With all His fullness can afford

We are supplied.

He richly feeds our souls

With blessings from above,

And leads us where the river rolls

Of endless love.

"Our souls He doth restore,

And keeps us in the way;

He makes our cup of joy run o'er

From day to day;

Through love so full, so deep,

Anointed is our head;

Mercy and goodness us shall keep,

Where'er we tread.

"When faith and hope shall cease,

And love abide alone,

Then shall we see Him face to face,

And know as known.

Still shall we lift our voice,

His praise our song shall be;

And we shall in His love rejoice,

Who set us free."

Piling up Glory

Those who are sick can get strength and comfort from this passage in Psalm 41:3: "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." The Hebrew indicates, "Thou turnest or changest his bed in his sickness."

This is most wonderful! God takes a personal interest in His sick saints! He whispers words of comfort to them, and in many ways makes their "bed" of suffering, whereon they are languishing, easier to lie on. He not only eases the pain, but He assures His children who are enduring affliction that their "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for [them] a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4:17. Be encouraged, dear suffering saint, your affliction, if faithfully endured for His glory, is actually working for you-piling up GLORY!

To get the needed strength day by day in the time of testing, it is necessary that we "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18.

Power in Weakness

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Cor. 12:9.

The first sentence of the verse is sometimes overlooked - • 'He said unto me' Paul got it from Christ. You may tell me that Christ is sufficient, but I must get it myself personally from Christ in heaven, and that will assure my heart. If we want to be delivered from ourselves, or from whatever difficulties may be in our pathway, He is sufficient. The result is, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities." He besought the Lord thrice before to take away the thorn, but now a communication from Christ has altered everything; the voice of Christ alters everything. There is no third party here; it is not He said unto us, but unto me. I do not mean anything imaginative - only the simplicity of intercourse with Christ about everything in our pathway. "That the power of Christ may rest upon me." (Or, "power of Christ may tabernacle" - "Have its dwelling-place on me." J.N.D. Trans. note.) For the saint of God who walks in conscious weakness and powerlessness there is an invisible power overshadowing him all the pathway through. I believe we often try to muster up power like getting up steam, but it is in the sense of weakness that there is power.

Prayer

Mark 11:22-26

I have found Mark 11:22-26 to be of great benefit. Here we have:

FAITH-The "Faith of God;" that is, faith that takes its character and strength from God-faith that brings God into the difficulty. There is a mountain to be removed. Only God can lift a mountain up and throw it into the sea. But He is greater than the mountain, and if you can bring Him into the matter, the mountain must go.

Prayer is our proper attitude. Through it we express our dependence on God, but only the prayer of faith is effectual, although that may be feeble.

3. But this prayer of faith is also conditional on a certain state in us, and that is the spirit of forgiveness. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any." It is not here going to one who has wronged you, and telling him you forgive him. In such a case the word is, "If he repent, forgive him." But here it is the state of our hearts toward our brethren when we are in the presence of God. Suppose I am praying to God who has forgiven me ten thousand talents in absolute grace, and am holding something against one who may have wronged me; God will not hear me. I am not in communion; my state is wrong. I am not in the current of God's thoughts, and will not be able to exercise faith.

A person says, "I cannot feel right toward Mr. A." That is, he has hard feelings toward Mr. A. But can I think of God in this way? Can I speak of Him as having "hard" feelings toward anyone? Never. When we were enemies, He gave His Son. Now my heart is to be in the same state as His; that is, my feelings and desires are to be formed by what flows down in communion through the Word from His heart into mine. And if this is my state when I pray, I will forgive if I have anything against anyone, and my heart will be free in God's presence. However my brother may have erred, I will be able to seek his blessing and restoration. In case of personal difficulties among saints, if this state is reached in God's presence, it is

wonderful how soon difficulties melt away, because it is God Himself coming in to act in grace.

Priorities

Young Christian, form the habit while young in your Christian life, that when there is a meeting, you are going to be there, and you will be blessed for it unless you have a definite word from the Lord that He does not want you to go.

Students often can make a lot of excuses for missing a meeting, and teachers can too; for that matter, anyone can. But we have seen dear young Christians who have never questioned staying away from a meeting. They felt that when there was a meeting, it was their place to attend, and they were present. And at school they passed, and made their grades too; they steadily went forward and they made a good record. They were not slovenly in their grades, and what is best of all, they kept happy in their souls!

So do not deceive yourself by thinking that your school work, or other duties, have a right to keep you from assembling with God's people. If you want to be happy in the Lord, and go on in the truth, take advantage of the meeting together of God's people. Form that habit. Do not even raise the question, Shall I go, or shall I not go? but leave that question entirely out; take it for granted that you are going.

There are some young people who, if they miss a meeting, no one ever knows it. There are other young people who, when they miss a meeting, the next time we see them we inquire why they were not there, and they can always give a satisfactory answer. But is it not a sad reflection when someone can stay away for quite a while, and no one ever says a word about it? In such a case, they just take it for granted that such a person does not come regularly, and for that reason is not expected. But, if we are faithful to the Lord, it is evidenced that our desire is to be with God's people. God's people get to depending on us to be present. They want us to be there, and they feel it if we are not there, because they depend upon us as a source of help.

Quietness of Spirit

One great evidence of my abiding in Christ is quietness of spirit. I have my portion elsewhere, and I go on. No matter what it may be, we bring quietness of spirit into all circumstances while dwelling with God.

The soul is not only happy in God for itself, but it will bring the tones of that place out with it.

The Red Sea and the Wilderness

Read Exod. 15

It is easy to understand the children of Israel's distress-the sea stretched before them, shutting them in, and Pharaoh and his host pursuing, so that they were sore afraid and cried unto the Lord, and said to Moses: "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast Thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" Although they had cried to the Lord, they had not in their hearts counted on His delivering them. It must, therefore, have been a wonderful thing to them when God so publicly manifested Himself to be on their side. So it is with our hearts when surrounded with trial, shut in, as it were, with troubles of one sort or another. So often it is then that our hearts are found buried under the circumstances, instead of trusting on the God who is above them either to sustain us or to deliver us from them.

The Israelites were dealt with in unqualified grace, whatever might be their murmurings, till they reached Sinai, that they might know how entirely God was for them. Afterward, through their folly in putting themselves under the law, which they ought to have known they could not keep, they brought upon themselves a different line of treatment. In the 16th chapter, when they murmured for food, God gave them quails (as well as manna) without any reproach, that Israel might know that God was feeding them on the ground of perfect grace. But afterward, when they again murmured for flesh (being then under law), we read that while it was yet in their mouths, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote them with a very great plague. But God would first have them know how entirely bent He was on doing them good, despite their wickedness.

It is well to distinguish, for our souls' profit, the difference between the Passover and the Red Sea. A person may hear the gospel, receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins; he may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections drawn out toward Himself, but if full redemption is not known, as typified by the Red Sea, if he does not see that Christ's death for him delivers him from death and judgment, he is almost sure to lose his joy when temptation comes and he learns his own weakness. The joy of chapter 15 is that God has absolutely redeemed them out of Egypt, and brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. This is a very different thing from the joy of the Passover-being delivered from just and deserved judgment. In the Passover, Jehovah has revealed Himself to them as the God of judgment. The blood on the doorposts screened them from judgment; it kept Him out, and He did not come into their houses to destroy. At the Red Sea it was another thing-it was God coming in strength as their salvation. The Passover delivered them from His judgment, the Red Sea from their enemies. The moment His people are in danger from Pharaoh, He came in. The very sea they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, became the means of their salvation. Thus through death God delivered them from death, even as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan under the power of death, and, rising again from the dead, delivered us from death. Thus there was an end of Pharaoh and Egypt to them forever. The Red Sea was redemption out of Egypt; God Himself

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

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

"Thou shalt... plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance." v. 17.

This was yet to be done, but they were already with Him in His holy habitation-not theirs but His. We also are in His presence, brought to God, though not yet in the place prepared for us on high. So, in Ephesians 1, the Apostle prays that the believers "may know what is the hope of His calling, and... the glory of His inheritance in the saints." It was God's land that the Israelites were to dwell in, and it is the Father's house in which our home shall be. It is His glory, and He will bring us into it. We do not need to fear the enemies by the way; to faith they are powerless. Full confidence belongs to redemption. Is it then, as men would say, all "smooth sailing" now? No. We, too, are in a wilderness, a dry and thirsty land.

Does this make redemption uncertain? Not at all. Yet it is a dreadful thing to have no water; it was certain death in those countries. Had He then brought them through the Red Sea and unto Himself to kill them with thirst? When at length they did find water, it was bitter. But this was to prove them and to bring out what was in their hearts. The bitter water did not show what was in God's heart (redemption had shown that); but in their hearts lay much that had to be manifested and corrected. Being redeemed forever, they must learn that there is nothing for us in the wilderness. All supply must come from God Himself. This is the very effect of redemption, and there is much in us to be brought out and corrected. He, however, makes the water sweet.

We must all learn in a practical way about death (being redeemed, we have life) and it cannot be learned in Egypt. They had no Marah in Egypt. It is a wilderness experience. Redemption must be known first, and the practical effect will be death to sin, to selfishness, to one's own will; all this is very trying. A person might be tempted to say, All this trial comes upon me because I have not redemption. Not so; it is just because you are redeemed: We may seek to avoid the bitter waters of Marah, but God will bring us to them. He must break down all that is of the old man, and then, in His own good time, He will put in that which sweetens all. But because God has brought me to Himself, He is putting His finger on everything (whether it be love of the world, setting up self, my own will) that hinders complete dependence on Him, or my soul's full enjoyment of Himself. But

count it not strange, though it be a fiery trial which is to try you, for as surely as you are redeemed, so He will break down your own will. God will make you drink of the very thing (death) that redeemed you.

And now Israel is going on with God, and He is dealing with them. He gave them statutes, etc. This He did not do before He had redeemed them. They had been troubled before by Pharaoh, but now it was from God. In having to do with God, they learn God in a new character-"the Lord that healeth." This is a different thing from His promise, that if they were obedient He would bring none of the diseases of Egypt upon them. They were exercised by God, so that they might know Him as the Healer. This is the same reason that the whole heart has to be brought out before God. We cannot escape it. He will so order circumstances as to bring it about. If we have been seeking to magnify self, then we may have to be humbled before men, and this is very trying, very bitter water. But as soon as the tree (the cross) is in the waters, they become sweet and refresh the soul. This is joy in tribulation. Joy in redemption comes first, but now there is refreshment in the healing. First, God makes us to sing in the knowledge of redemption, and then, if we are to have the practical effect of redemption which is the enjoyment of God Himself in our souls, the flesh which would always hinder this must be broken down in whatever form it works. God knew what was in the Israelites' hearts, but they did not, and they had to learn it.

After this they came to Him. Once humbled, they were able to experience the natural consequences of being with God-the full streams of refreshment-but the humbling process had to occur first. Had Elim come first, there would have been no sense of their dependence on the Lord for everything, and their wills would have remained unbroken. But trial produces dependence, and dependence, communion. It is only for this that He delays, for He delights in blessing His people. The numbers 12 and 70 are different figures of perfection: perfect refreshment and perfect shelter. All this took place in the wilderness, and then they had rest.

They had to be exercised at Marah, that they might fully know and enjoy Him at Elim. Redemption brought them indeed to God, but now it is joy in God. So it is with us. Although we are redeemed, we cannot have these springs from God Himself flowing through our souls, with unbroken flesh. But whatever trial we are in, however deeply we may have to drink into death, there is resurrection as well as death, and when we see God's hand in it-when we see the cross of Christ in the bitter waters-we understand God's mind and purpose in them, and they become sweet to us. We cannot walk a path of faith without having faith, so we must be put to the test. Not that tribulation seems joyous for the present, but grievous, but afterward it yields the peaceable fruits unto them that are exercised thereby. Confidence in the flesh is not faith. If I lose my trust in God for one minute, that very minute the flesh comes in under some form or other. Whenever I feel perplexed, the eye is not single. If the eye were single, the whole body would be full of light. Perhaps there is something yet to be detected in us, something we have not yet found out in our own hearts. It may not be willful sin, but there is something He will exercise our hearts about, something as to which He will manifest Himself as Jehovah-Rophi. Thus we learn to rejoice in tribulation also, and then to rejoice in God, finding springs of joy refreshing us in the wilderness in God who brought us there. Let us then not count trial a strange thing, for we know its purpose, even that we may joy in God Himself.

Reformation Is Not a Cure

You will find that, though man changes his way, he never cures himself. This truth has had abundant illustrations in the progress of the world's history, and may be a seasonable warning to us just at this moment.

Israel in the wilderness illustrates this. They made a calf first; afterward they made a captain. The unclean idol was followed by setting up one of themselves, but this was only a change, and not cure.

Israel in the land did the same again. They had the gods of the nations as their gods till Babylon became the place of their captivity and judgment. But when returned to the land, though they did not return to their idols, they became infidel and presumptuous. Read their ways in Ezra and Nehemiah, and very specially in Malachi. Again it was change, and not cure.

The Lord in His teaching contemplates this (see Matt. 12 and Luke 11). It was first the unclean house, and then the swept and garnished house. But this was no cure. Some said the Lord did His works by Beelzebub, and others challenged Him for a sign. They may vary in the form of their enmity, but it is enmity still. Instead of all this change working a cure, the last state is worse than the first. What transpires in the swept house is still worse than what had been practiced in the unclean house.

This serious truth is important for us today. The nations are now proclaiming a change. Men's hearts are beating high, and promising them great things. It is well to remember that man may change his way, but he never can cure himself. The change only ends in something worse. In the "latter times" of Christendom we get certain forms of evil (1 Tim. 4), but when we read of the "last days," we find it is only a change of the former (2 Tim. 3). It is evil still, and no cure.

In the awful disclosures of the Apocalypse we also find that it is change, and not cure. The woman that corrupted the earth is removed, but the beast and his army take the lead and exercise their strength against the Lord (chap. 19). The kings of the earth may hate the whore and put her down, but then this is only to give their power to the beast and put him up (chap. 17).

Many changes occur. One form of evil gives place to another. There is no cure. Judgment must be executed, and that is not cure, but the groundwork for something new. The judgment will displace man and corruption, and make room for Christ and His power and righteousness.

The evil is incurable, and must be displaced by judgment. And just as man's change of his ways did not work a cure, so the Lord's different dealings with him have not worked correction. "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." Isa. 26:10. Nothing remains but judgment. Isaiah also tells us that, "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Isa. 26:9. We also read, "All nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest." Rev. 15:4.

The Reformation was a change, but no cure, and judgment still awaits Christendom.

Rest at Noon

"Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?" ' Song of Solomon 1:7.

"Rest at noon"! How inviting it sounds! To understand this song, we must picture ourselves in Eastern lands. It is noon, and the rays of the scorching sun are beating upon the parched and wearied earth. There is no escape from its pitiless glare. But there is One who is skillful in finding rest even at noon for His flock; He is addressed as the One "whom my soul loveth."

Dear troubled, anxious Christian, has it been noon with you? Have the scorching rays of tribulation, trial, weakness of body, or of shattered hopes and a broken spirit reached you, till you have felt you could bear no more? What you need is REST.

There is One whom thy soul loveth, who can give the rest you need. He loves you well, and it is He who has permitted the tribulation, the weakness of body, the broken spirit in order that, parched and weary, you might at length turn to Him and find "rest at noon." Even at noon there is a place of perfect peace. What a rest it is! To lie perfectly passive in His hands, knowing that the love, the perfect divine love which has planned out your pathway, has measured, in its omniscience, the weight of your sorrow. He is engaged in working out the purposes of His love in you for His own glory first, and then for your exceeding gain. In the knowledge of that love your heart may rest-"Rest at noon."

I knew a Christian who was dying. One would have thought that he could not stand any greater pressure and further weakening, but the fiercer the trial the more beautiful was the rest that he enjoyed. There is no possible combination of circumstances in which this rest may not be known.

"A MAN shall be... as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Isa. 32:2.

"Come unto ME, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matt. 11:28.

The same truth is put in different ways. In all our weariness we know Him who knew weariness and thirst-A Man who was "God over all, blessed forever," yet truly Man, now glorified, the succorer of His people and their Great High Priest, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Surely we can find rest in Him, as under "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He gives the invitation: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Every weary sinner who comes to Him will find rest, yet it is not confined to that, but is an invitation to you that labor and are heavy laden to rest.

Blessed Jesus! The One whom our souls love is the same who can give rest to His flock at noon. "Rest at Noon"! Do you know anything of it?

Risen With Christ

Col. 3:1-10

We get here the blessed side of the Christian state - being risen with Christ, the great groundwork on

which we are. It is not that Christ has died for our sins, but that we have died and are risen; this is the starting point of the exhortation. We have done altogether with the old man, having died as children of Adam; we are also risen, having totally done with the world, although still in it, but risen with Christ; therefore you get the practice of a person risen, and the affections and state and condition of the heart. The Christian is looked at as a person not alive on earth at all; he has died, and now, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."

In chapter 2 you get, "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" You are not living in the world; you are dead. Now set your affections on things above. You belong there; you have not gone there yet, but the new man has no

desire for earthly things. The Spirit takes of "the things of Christ" and shows them to you, not to fix your heart on earthly things, but to deliver you from them; we are to be, in spirit, mind, and affections, up there. We are risen, and have nothing more to do with the world as to our affections and object than a man who has died. It does not say, "You must die," but "You are dead," for that is the Christian state. Christ having died, and He being my life, my life is hid up there in Him. There is complete association with Christ. He has died; I have died. He is hidden up there; my life is hidden. He will appear; I shall appear with Him in glory. Thorough, complete, blessed association with Christ is the place into which we are put, and it is the starting point of the character of this life displayed on the earth to which we do not belong. If an angel were here, he would do that which was God's will for him, but he would have nothing to do with the earth as the object for which he lived.

The Apostle does not allow that we have any life here, but talks of our members: "Mortify [put to death] therefore your members which are upon the earth." All that proceeds from the flesh, the Christian is not to allow for a moment. Mark how different it is from dying to sin, as people speak. Mortify is just the opposite; it is putting to death. That is power. If I say, "I must die," that is being alive. We are dead to sin, the world, and the law. Christ having died, we also have died. What is true of Him is true of us. Having now life and power, we are to put these things to death. There is no more lust, or self-will, or working of the flesh, if a man is dead. I am to reckon myself dead, not trying to die to sin, for I should not be able; that is, the flesh, the old man, does not want to die. The Apostle says, "Reckon yourselves dead." You have died. Then put off the old man. "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Rom. 6:6. Now I have the place of power to put to death every evil that the flesh would produce. Put to death your members, not your life in Adam. You are dead, therefore put to death your members. If you let them act, it is the flesh. The Christian has power in Christ - "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"

(Phil. 4:13) - to put down everything inconsistent with the life in which this power is. The life is hid with Christ in God, but your members are on the earth, and he says, in effect, "Now keep them in order; you have the power of Christ."

There is no deliverance till you get to that. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." We have to watch not to be careless and let these things spring up, but we have power to say, "Not a single sprout of the old stock shall spring up." The old tree is cut down and grafted. The old stock may begin to sprout, but that is not "the tree" in common parlance; it has been grafted. We know the stock is there, and so is the flesh there, but we must remember we have power, and must not excuse ourselves. Our will is not changed, but if Christ is our object, there is power. There is still the law of sin and death, but I am not a debtor to it; it has no claim or power over me. It will have power enough if we allow it, but we have a power entirely above it. The Lord leaves us here to learn to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil, to be tested and tried. The flesh is there, but if we are full of Christ we are masters of it; if we are not full of Christ, it masters us, but it is our own fault - we have no excuse. We have to exhibit this life of Christ or else the flesh acts, and then the old man is exhibited. The Apostle says, You are not living in the old man at all now; you are living in Christ and you are not going to walk in these things of the flesh.

In verse 7 he applies it to their walk. It requires us to make active use of the power. The flesh is soon up if we are not full of Christ. We are to arm ourselves with the power of Christ, and be active in keeping the flesh in its place - down altogether. If I am not full of Christ. for Himself, for His own sake, enjoying

Him, the flesh comes out. It will not do to put on your armor at the battle. Everything we pass through in this world is one of two things: either an occasion of obedience to the new man, or of temptation to the old.

The Lord prayed in an agony in Gethsemane, and when they came to take Him, He said, "Whom seek ye?" He had gone through it with His Father, and it was an occasion of obedience when it came. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Peter was asleep in the garden, and when the Lord was witnessing a good confession, he was cursing and swearing he did not know Him. If he were full of Christ, temptations would be nothing but occasions of obedience and glorifying God. We need self-knowledge and diligence of heart in abiding in Christ for Himself, so that when the temptation comes, we do not enter into it, and it is an occasion of blessed obedience.

In verse 8 we come to another thing - there is no lust, but the flesh is not subdued. It is not lust to be angry, but anger is from nature, and that is not Christ. This is a second step - "also put off all these." We have done with those horrid evils that God abhors (and He abhors them even more in His children than in others; His delight in us does not change the holiness of His nature); now put off these which express an unsubdued will, and unarrested action of the flesh. If a man says something to me, and I get in a passion, that is not Christ; it is that which unsubdued flesh gives forth. "Lie not one to another." Satan was a liar and a murderer; we are to put off lying and violence. Put these off, because you "have put off the old man [faith has done it]... and have put on the new." You have done with the old man as to its very nature, and you have put on the new. Now do not bring forth the fruits of the old, the crabapples of the old stock. The new is "renewed in

knowledge after the image of Him that created him." The new man knows God, and esteems nothing as the right thing but what suits God. The Christian knows the love and holiness of God in Christ. It is the knowledge faith has in God.

There is no measure of the path I am to walk in as a new man but God Himself. That is where the Christian is set. Act in the same spirit and character as He has shown in Christ. Did He not show grace to you when you were an enemy? Then you go and show grace. Was He not full of mercy to the unthankful? Then you go and do the same. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48.

The Sacrifice of Praise

For over nineteen hundred years Christ has been sitting as the accepted sacrifice at the right hand of God. That fact tells of the marvelous greatness of God in condescending to accept anything from us. That He should keep that magnificent gift of His love ever before Him as the accepted sacrifice, and then turn to destitute creatures like you and me, and say, I am looking for a sacrifice from you (Heb. 13:15, 16), I desire that there should come forth even a trickling stream of praise from your lips, is a marvelous thing. When I think how Christ has loved me, that He has washed me from my sins in His own blood, that I am connected with all the blessing that rests on the head of the heavenly Man, and that I am to reign with Him too-have I nothing to say to His praise? Oh, how hard to think of what I ought to utter! How, in the wondrous thought that I am made so perfect by the blood of Thy Son, blessed God, and that I am to reign with Him, can I know what to say? It makes me turn to His word to find an expression for that which passes all comprehension. God has associated me with the Son of His love! "He is worthy. "

We always find in the thought of that precious blood that has washed us, something that gives a fresh impulse of praise to the feeblest lip. How far do we live in an atmosphere of praise? There is nothing like the inspiring power of praise to set the heart free from all the shackles and bands of the world. If you once begin upon it, you will find a thousand things to call it forth, that never struck you before, in connection with the Person and offices of the Lord Jesus.

The Second Coming of Christ

Notes on Luke 12:34-45

The coming of the Lord does not present itself, when we think of it rightly, as a thing we learn, but I see in Scripture that it is constantly identified with all the feelings and character of a Christian, "as men that wait for their lord." It does not say, "As men that believe in the Lord's coming." The feeling of those who had grown cold was not that the Lord would not come, but that He delayed His coming (v'.-45). Now in the beginning of 1 Thessalonians they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. He was a living, personal reality to them. There is a great deal more in the passage, but that is the first thing-they were

converted for that. Expecting Him is the state that becomes a Christian. I do not say there is no other motive, for the blessed love He has shown in His death would lead us to follow Him too, but still the Christian is a person between Christ's first coming to save him and His second coming to take him out of this scene, and what characterizes him (if he acts on the Word of God) is, that he is waiting for Christ.

It is described in detail in Luke 12. First comes the "watching," and then the "doing," that is, serving Him, while He is away. Those who are watching (v. 37), with their hearts upon Himself, He makes sit down to meat (a figure, of course), and He girds Himself and serves them. But when it involves doing (v. 43), it is then that He makes them rulers over all that He has. Verse 37 suggests the blessedness of heaven, and then in verse 44 the privilege of reigning as co-heirs with Him-two distinct things-one watching for Him, and the other, doing. The Christian knows that he is a person in whom dwells the Holy Spirit who is the seal to us of the full efficacy of Christ's work on the cross (and our part in it too). He is waiting for Christ to come, that event which will bring him into possession of the inheritance. Christ entered into possession, not of all things in the inheritance yet, but He is sitting on the Father's throne till the joint heirs are gathered, and then He will put them into glory.

The thing I find most precious about the coming of the Lord is, that the Person of the Lord becomes so prominent. It makes Him more precious. He is coming to take me to be with Himself. It is the Person who is

the Object of our affections as Christians. But it will be a grand thing when we are with Him, never to be separated from Him. It is not our glory that is the great satisfaction, but being with Him. It sets Christ

personally as the. One before our eyes.

There is another thing it does. This expectation of Him at any moment detaches us from the world, and when this is the case, the life of every Christian is drastically changed and all thoughts for tomorrow and plans are gone. There are two things necessary in order to be looking for the Lord in that way, peace with God, and love enough for Him to long for His coming. Of course, we must

have peace with God to be able to look for His coming, but it also depends a great deal on the heart's affection for Christ. "Unto you... which believe He is precious." It is wonderful how distinctly Scripture makes being with Christ the thing to hope for. It exercises the conscience also, because if I am looking for the Lord, evidently it will keep my conscience awake, lest I should have anything that will produce a jar in my own heart when He does come.

It is a striking thing as regards the present expectation, that in all the parables, whether it be Christ Himself speaking or the apostles by the Holy Spirit, it never supposes beforehand that His coming is beyond the life of the people He is speaking to. It is the present expectation. The virgins that slept were the same that woke. Those who received the talents were the same reckoned with. He would never present to them beforehand a thing that was beyond present expectation. It is evident we should like to be found, whether absent or present, agreeable to Him when He does come. It gives Christ the place. We are poor things, but if we heard Him saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," what a wonderful thing it would be to us

There is a little more than waiting in this chapter.

"Loins... girded about." The flowing garments are to be tucked up, not loosely going on with things as they are in the world, but hearts in order, according to the Word of God-"loins girt about with truth," and then "lights burning"-a full profession of Christ.

There is another thing quite distinct, a very blessed, touching expression of the Lord's love. Now we are to have our loins girded (our hearts in order), while the Lord has not yet come, but is sitting on the Father's throne, but then "He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." He says, You won't have to have your loins girded when you come into My house. I shall make you sit down to meat, and serve you. He will make us sit down and feed upon the things that are in heaven, and He will minister the blessings to us-ininitely more precious. It will mean not merely giving us things to eat, but Christ Himself ministering them to us. In that sense Christ never gives up the form of a servant, and when we think that Christ, the Son of God, assumes this place, has already taken it, and never will give it up, what a wonderful thing it is.

"Blessed are those servants," etc. v. 37. He will make them enjoy themselves, for His satisfaction is to make them happy. We do not believe enough in Christ's. toward us, and we have not enough heart for Him either. He values our affections: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." What a Savior He is! It is constant expectation-not waiting merely, but watching. The second part is doing (v. 43)-in a certain sense an inferior part. He has entrusted us with talents,

perhaps it may be giving "a cup of cold water," but He says, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." The Lord has

committed a service to all. An apostle, of course, is entirely given up to service, or it may come down to just the giving of a cup of cold water. The reward is not sitting down and enjoying heaven here. It is the kingdom, and yet more than the kingdom. The Father has set Christ over all the works of His hands, and He makes us joint heirs. But it is much more blessed to be with God Himself and to enjoy Him than to be heir with Christ, though, of course, that is a wonderful thing. It is especially in the kingdom that the ruling takes place; afterward Christ will give up the kingdom to the Father. There will then be no need for power to restore a kingdom to order, for it will all be

done.

Set Your Sails

The first time the well-known missionary, Hudson Taylor, went to China, he traveled by sailing ship. At one point during the voyage, the ship was becalmed near the northern coast of New Guinea.

The captain was most anxious, as the current was steadily carrying the ship towards some sunken reefs which would almost certainly wreck the vessel. Putting out the long-boat, the crew endeavored to turn the ship away from the shore, but without success. Without a wind, shipwreck seemed inevitable.

When the captain had tried his best to save the ship and failed, Hudson Taylor and three Christian friends went to their quarters to pray that God would send wind. After a brief time before the Lord in prayer, Taylor felt so certain that God had answered his prayer, that he returned to the deck and asked the mate to set the sails, as God was about to send the needed wind.

With an oath and a look of contempt, the mate replied that he would rather see a wind than hear about it.

Suddenly the corner of the topmost sail began to tremble in a breeze, and the mate agreed to let down the mainsail. Within a few moments, the wind strengthened and soon the ship was plowing her way at a steady six or seven knots an hour away from the dangerous reefs and out to sea.

God heard and answered the prayer of His servants in a most dramatic way.

The mate refused to set the sails until he saw evidence that Mr. Taylor's prayer had been answered. God wants us, however, to be ready when we ask anything of Him. We often pray, but many times we do not have sufficient faith to prepare for the answer.

"According to your' faith be it unto you." Matt. 9:29.

The Spirit, Not of Fear, but of Power

Such exhortations as we find in 2 Tim. 1:3-8 are never given unless there are circumstances to require it. They are intended to meet some tendency in the flesh, that we may guard against it in the Spirit. It is well to remember how the Lord deals with us, just as we are, and how, in all His ways, He takes into account the circumstances we are in, and does not, like philosophy, take us into other circumstances.

With regard to our cares and trials, Christ does not take us out of them: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world." John 17:15. While He leaves us in the world, He leaves us liable to all that is incident to man, but in the new nature teaches us to lean on God. The thought with us often is that (because we are Christians) we are to get away from trials, or else, if in them, we are not to feel them. This is not God's thought concerning us.

The theoretical Christian may be placid and calm; he has fine books and nice sayings, but, when he has something from God to ruffle his placidity, you will find he becomes more conscious of the difficulties there are in the world, and of the difficulty of getting over such. The nearer a man walks with God through grace, the more tender he becomes as to the faults of others; the longer he lives as a saint, the more conscious he becomes of the faithfulness and tenderness of God, and of what it has been applied to in himself.

See the life of the Lord Jesus; take Gethsemane, what do we find? Never a cloud over His soul, uniform placidity. You never see Him off His center. He is always Himself. But take the Psalms, and do we find nothing within to break that placidity? The Psalms bring out what was passing within. In the gospels He is presented to man as the testimony of the power of God with Him in those very things that would have vexed man. He walked with God about them, and so we find Him in perfect peace saying with calmness, "Whom seek ye?"-"I am He." How peaceful! How commanding, for peace in the midst of difficulties does command. When by Himself, in an agony, He sweats as it were great drops of blood; it was not a placidity because He had not heart-feeling within. He felt the full trial, in Spirit, but God was always with Him in the circumstances, and, therefore, He was uniformly calm before men.

We are not to expect never to be exercised or troubled or cast down, as though we were without feeling. "They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." He thoroughly felt it all. The iron entered His soul. "Reproach," He says, "hath broken My heart." But there is this difference between Christ, in suffering and affliction, and ourselves, that with Him there was never an instant elapsed between the trial and communion with God. This is not the case with us. We first have to find out that we are weak and cannot help ourselves, and then we turn, and look to God.

Where was Paul when he said, "All men forsook me"? His confidence in God was not shaken, but, looking around him, by the time he got to the end of his ministry, his heart was broken because of the unfaithfulness. He saw the flood of evil coming in (chaps. 3 and 4) and the danger of Timothy's

being left alone, looking at the evil, and feeling his own weakness, and so (lest Timothy should get into a spirit of fear) he says, "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee... for God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." If we have the spirit of fear, this is not of God, for God has given us the spirit of power. He has set the whole power of the enemy in the weakness of men, in Christ, and Christ is now set down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

"Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." What! a partaker of afflictions? Yes. Of deliverance from the sense of them? No-a partaker of afflictions that may be felt as a man, but "according to the power of God."

This is not in not feeling the presence of sorrow and weakness. Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12), and did he not feel it? Yes, he felt it daily, and as a "messenger of Satan to buffet" him withal. And what did he say? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities [in those things in which I am sensibly weak], that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The power of God coming in on our side does not lessen the feeling to us, but we cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for us. Not that at the very moment we refer it to God we shall get an answer. Daniel had to wait three full weeks for an answer from God, but from the first day that he set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before his God, his words were heard (Dan. 10). With us the first thing often is to think about the thing, and begin to work it out in our own minds before we go to God. There was none of this in Christ. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father," etc. (Matt. 11). We weary ourselves in the greatness of our way.

"Be careful for nothing" Phil. 4:6. That is easily said. But what-not be careful about the state of the Church, or about the pressure of a family? "Be careful for nothing." Whatever produces a care in us, produces God's care for us, therefore, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." So, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Not your hearts keep the peace of God, but the peace that God Himself is in, His peace, the unmoved stability of all God's thoughts, keep your hearts.

Further, when not full of care, the mind set free and the peace of God keeping the heart, God sets the soul thinking on happy things. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest... just... pure... lovely... of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." God is there the companion of the soul-not merely "the peace of God," but "the God of peace."

When the soul is cast upon God, the Lord is with the soul in the trial, and the mind is kept perfectly calm. The Spirit of love, the Spirit of Christ, is there, but if I am thinking of myself, this is the spirit of selfishness.

Spiritual Growth and Its Aberrations

Growth is the natural advancement of the children of God from the state of babes to become "young men" and "fathers" in Christ (1 John 2:12-14). But this may become either hindered or unnatural, and, consequently, the state may become all wrong. The Corinthians were still remaining in the condition of babes when the Apostle addressed his first epistle to them: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." 1 Cor. 3:1, 2. The word "hitherto" in this passage shows that they had never yet been in any other condition; they had remained in the condition of babes.

The Hebrews were somewhat similar, only with this difference-the Hebrews had advanced, but had afterward returned to the state of babes. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe." Heb. 5:12, 13. "Ye are become such" shows that they had returned to that state. "But call to remembrance the former days." Ah, he says, You have regressed since the days when you endured a great fight of afflictions; you have forgotten the time when you "took joyfully the spoiling of your goods" because you knew that you possessed "in heaven a better and an enduring substance." (Heb. 10.) "Now

the just shall live by faith. -

Scripture presents three states of soul, or stages of growth, found among the children of God. These three states are easily discernible among Christians in our own day, and all three are evil, because they all arise from an arrested or unnatural growth. First there is the dwarf state, remaining in the condition of babes; second, the state of second childhood, or returning to that condition; third, the result of both of these-deformity.

The first state is illustrated by the Corinthians. Christians in this state are generally quite satisfied with themselves, and with what they know; they are never found running, as it were, in Paul's company as in 1 Cor. 8:2, and Phil. 3:12-14. In other words, they are at a standstill.

Second, there is the state of second childhood, the condition of the Hebrews. This state is not characterized so much by impeded growth, as at Corinth, but by unnatural growth; the internal has not kept pace with the external. It is more difficult to detect, for there is all the outward appearance of wisdom and manhood, but the power is wanting. This is a sad condition. There is refreshment in looking upon the confiding fresh young life of a babe; internally and externally there is harmony in such a one. But it is sad indeed to be brought face to face with second childhood. The hoary head that should have rightly guided or curbed the impetuosity of youth by 'its wise and prudent counsel, that should have encouraged the feeble steps of the tottering babe, how sad to see its utter impotency and helplessness.

In the third state, deformity, something is manifested that is repulsive to the spiritual eye. The saints addressed in 1 Corinthians and in the epistle to the Galatians are examples of a deformed state. It is clear that in natural things deformity may be either mental or physical. It may be that of the mind, which is internal, or that of the body, which is external and more visible. This is also true in the things of God, and both are illustrated in those addressed in these two epistles. Practice was wrong with the Corinthians, doctrine with the Galatians; the latter being internal, and far more serious than the former. It needed no great spiritual discernment to detect the deformity at Corinth. That which was allowed among them was a common scandal, and such as was "not so much as named" even among the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5). Yet he does not address such solemn warnings and denunciations to all the moral evil existing at Corinth as he addresses to the doctrinal evil at Galatia. (Gal. 1:6-9; 3:4; 4:11, 20; 5:1, 4, 7, 12.)

In Galatians the Apostle does not mention outward immorality such as we find in 1 Corinthians, and it is possible that in Galatia there was outwardly very little to complain of, the breaking of bread going on as usual, and those who attended it outwardly blameless. But they had gone back (Gal. 4:9); they had begun in the Spirit, but were now hindered, "bewitched" (Gal. 3:1). The "first works" (Rev. 2:5) were no longer done, legal works were adopted, and "the bondwoman and her son" were brought back to the house (Gal. 4:30). But what had they done? They had neglected the teaching of the Word by the Spirit, a certain line of action not left to their judgment, but laid down for them, which is called obeying the truth (Gal. 3:1). Their state was terrible to the Apostle, for if the teaching of the Spirit and the Word are given up by saints, what is left?

To remain in the condition of babes is dwarfishness, and produces external deformity, while to return to this condition, having known better, is second childhood, and is solemnly condemned by the Apostle who says, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." Gal. 4:11. Doubtless the Hebrews were in danger of falling into the same state, though not so far advanced as the Galatians in it. There is overwhelming danger in this state. The soul is slumbering and content with itself, and no human power, nothing but the solemn voice of the Lord by the Apostle can arouse it. He was not, and never can be indifferent to such a state.

It is a matter of comfort to the servants of the Lord, that souls in the three evil states we have been considering are not beyond recovery through the application of the Word in the power of the Spirit of God, for we have all three of them addressed in the passages we have had before us. Nothing but divine wisdom can help us in dealing with such souls. By ignoring their state, we are allowing them to continue in it, but by ignoring them because of their state, we deprive ourselves of the duty and privilege of helping them to recovery.

We have been looking at arrested growth and have considered unnatural growth. We have seen that deformity follows each of them. The means of true growth, however, is given to us in 1 Pet. 2:2. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

In the first epistle of John, we learn that true growth always manifests itself in increased occupation of the soul with the Person of Christ. When John is

writing of the "fathers" he says that he has written and still writes to them because they have "known Him that is from the beginning." This is all he has to say of them and he adds no further counsel to them as he does to the young men (1 John 2:15-17) and also to the babes (vv. 18-27).

The omission, however, is full of instruction, for the few words he does say of them are in effect: You have already begun while yet upon earth the occupation of heaven and eternity, and I know of nothing beyond it. Thus true growth was manifested, for in the day of Revelation 5, a day swiftly approaching, "Jesus only" fills the scene and occupies "every family in the heavens" (Eph. 3:15 JND Trans.), and that holds true whatever their intelligence or however varied their comprehension of Him and His ways may be. If we are growing now upon earth, it will manifest itself in more caring for Him and for His approval, in pleasing the Lord at all cost (2 Cor. 5:9), and in ministering to those for whom He died. (1 John 5:1.)

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." 1 Cor. 13:11. Peter adds, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. 3:18. There is no growth except by the Word "which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 1 Thess. 2:13. If at first it gave me life, it must effectually work now in me if I am to grow, and may it be so with us increasingly to the praise and to the glory of His grace.

Spiritual Understanding

A man might possess vast stores of erudition and be able with ease to quote every page of this world's dark history, and still not be in the least degree better prepared for the study of God's prophetic word. The humble Christian, unable to read the Scriptures in any language but his own, and entirely unacquainted with the details of profane history, may, nevertheless, prayerfully study the prophetic scriptures. Equally with the most learned, he may count on his Father's faithful love to enable him, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to understand what the Scriptures unfold of the diverse glories of Christ, whether in His relation to the Church, or to Israel, the world, and creation, over the whole of which His rule is yet to extend.

The Tears of Joseph

We may learn many lessons from the tears of Joseph, whose life stands out so specially as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the beginning, when Joseph saw conviction awakening in the consciences of his brethren, he wept. These were tears both of sorrow and of joy. He felt for them passing through the agony, but he must have rejoiced to see the needed arrow reaching its mark, and the bleeding of the wounds that followed.

He wept again when he saw Benjamin. This was the son of his own mother, her only child besides himself, whose birth had caused her death. Joseph saw in Benjamin the only one of his father's sons (who were all then before him) who had not been guilty of his blood. Nature therefore, could account for these tears.

He wept again as he saw the work of repentance going on in his brethren. In his way, he greatly longed after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ, till at last Judah's words were too much for him; conviction of conscience resulted in restoration of heart. Judah's references again and again to "the old man" and the "lad" had eloquence which prevailed, and Joseph could no longer refrain himself. He sobbed aloud, and the whole house of Pharaoh heard him. But these were more than the tears of nature; they were the compassion of Christ.

Each of these weepings was beautiful in its season, but there is still more. When Joseph's father died, Joseph fell on his father's face and wept. This scene resembles the grave of Lazarus, where Jesus wept.

Again he wept when, after his father's death, his brethren began to suspect his love. He was disappointed. An unworthy response to a constant, patient, serving love, made him weep in the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem. For years Joseph had been doing all he could to win the confidence of his brothers. He had nourished them and their little ones. Years had now passed, and not one rebuke to them do we find, either in his life or in his ways. Grief over their departed father had just freshly proved to them what common affections they had to bind them together. Joseph had supplied them with every reason to trust him. And after all this they were still doubting him. This was a terrible shock to such a heart as Joseph's. And yet he did not resent it, but with his tears gave renewed assurances of his diligent, faithful love. Do not such tears as these spring from a higher love—a divine love? They foreshadow the yearnings of the grieved spirit of the Lord Himself, who said: "How long shall I be with you?" "Why are ye fearful?" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?"

The Lord Jesus has sanctified tears, and made them, like everything else that went up from Him to God, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor. Joseph, as well as David, Paul, Jonathan, and Timothy, too, have made them precious, and have placed them among the treasures of the Spirit in the bosom of the Church.

Jesus, the Poor Man

"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. 8:9. Jesus was the poorest man that ever walked the dirt roads of earth. Born in poverty and reared in obscurity, He yet lived to enrich mankind. A stable was His very humble birthplace; a lowly manger was His crude cradle. For thirty years He lived in a poverty-stricken and despised village which bore the scorn of men as they asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He began His ministry at the Jordan River with no temporal means, no income, and no vocation but to love God and to bless man. With no organization to help Him, with no patrons to enrich Him, He publicly began the life of poverty that ended at the tomb. He preached without price and wrought

miracles without money. As far as we know, He never possessed the value of one dollar. How humbling were His words, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Matt. 8:20.

He had no certain dwelling-place. He was an itinerant preacher whose parish was the world. When invited, He entered men's homes for dinner; when unasked, He went hungry. He sought breakfast from a leafing fig tree, but found none. He ate grain from His hands as He walked through the fields of corn. He sent Peter to the sea for the fish that they might have the money for the temple tax.

He walked over the hills of Judea and by the waters of fair Galilee, enriching men, Himself the poorest of all. He slept often under the open sky. In the wilderness without food, by Jacob's well without water, in the crowded city without a home-thus He lived and loved, toiled and died.

The value placed upon His Person was thirty pieces of silver-the price of a slave, the lowest estimate of human life. He was nailed to that cross between two thieves, stripped of His robe for which the brutish soldiers gambled as He died. With no estate with which to endow His mother, He bequeathed her to the love of the beloved John. He gave His peace to His disciples, His pardon to the thief, His life for the world, His body to the cross, and His spirit to God.

His burial clothes were the gift of a friend, and He was laid at last in a borrowed grave.

Such was the lowly course down here of our blessed Savior. May the response of our hearts be that of the hymnist:

We are but strangers here we do not crave

A home on earth which gave Thee but a grave. Thy cross has severed ties which bound us here, Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere.

The Third Thing

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

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

"What do you mean?"

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

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

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

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

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

power of the Spirit, who dwells in us, goodness will manifest itself in innumerable ways in ministering for Him, both to the souls and bodies of those around us.

The heart will be happy and confident in God as to temporal resources, and liberality will characterize us in communicating of our substance for the benefit of others. Selfishness will depart, with self being displaced by Christ.

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

Fellow-Christian, do you follow this order?

Thomas Called Didymus

John 20:24-29

On the evening of the first day of the week-the resurrection day, that day so great with victory-a little company of men had assembled secretly and perhaps spontaneously. as drawn together by new bonds. They were the disciples of Jesus. Fear of the Jews had made them close the ' doors, for already diversity of religious interests began to separate the true from the false, and lead the faithful minority to seek shelter from persecution. As they assembled in the quiet hours of the evening, their hearts were free to dwell on the marvelous event of the morning. The Lord was risen. He had been seen and heard. The very Jesus whom they had seen nailed to the tree, and whose side had been pierced, was now actually alive again.

Often He had told them that He was to die and be raised again the third day, yet they had never truly believed His words. Then, they witnessed His death and burial and sorrow filled their hearts, for they had lost everything. The whole scene was only desolation to each of those whose very being had been wrapped up in a living Christ. Then they heard of His having risen. Their burdened hearts now filled with hope. His words began to take shape in their memories. The third day had come, and with it the report of His resurrection. Could it be true?

We are not told what the disciples were discussing as they met behind closed doors, but while they were conversing together, Jesus entered and stood in the midst and said, "Peace be unto you." Calm and calming, peaceful and peace-giving, the risen Lord placed Himself amid His assembled disciples. How full of gracious majesty!

A few days before, these very men had all forsaken Him and fled, yet now not a word of rebuke escaped His lips. He 'did not taunt them with their unfaithfulness; He did not upbraid them for their ignorance. He did not forsake them, but in their very midst He proclaimed peace to them as the result of the battle fought and the victory won. Peace had been made by the blood of the cross, with pardon to the believer and eternal honor to the Savior. That peace was the fruit of the soul travail of the Son of God, and is the abiding portion of all who are His. What a salvation for such a company! What a word to burst from the lips of the risen One as He owns them as His brethren!

"And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side," tenderly corroborating by tangible tokens the truth of His words, and identifying Himself to them by unmistakable proofs. Once more He said, "Peace be unto you," and then He sent them as the Father had sent Him. Then He breathed upon them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." How rich an investiture! Having peace, they were free to go as His missionaries in blest occupation with His interests and more than that, they were possessed of His life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Such was the result of this first meeting of the disciples after the Lord's resurrection.

"But Thomas... called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." How was that? Why was Thomas absent at such a moment? He had never expected that

Jesus would preside there, or else he surely would have been present. Was self-will at work? Had he heard the report of the morning, and discredited it? Was the news too good to be true? Was the resurrection of Jesus impossible? Whatever the reason, Thomas was absent from this informal meeting of his fellow disciples, and he was the loser. He missed hearing those words of peace and of liberty. He missed seeing the Lord's hands and side. He missed that first sight of their Lord, as in grace He placed Himself in the midst of His brethren. How much we, too, may lose through a little willful neglect! It is often ruinous to despise meetings of true hearts just because they are small. The Lord may select such as spheres of rich unfoldings of Himself in His Word.

The disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, but he refused to believe them. A mere sight of Jesus would not suffice for him. No, unless he could put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the side, he would not believe. The disciples had said all they could. It was outside their power to communicate faith to their unbelieving brother. In such a case the help of man is vain. The perplexed and troubled soul must have to do personally, directly and individually with God. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." Psalm 34:5.

Thomas, though loud and willful, was sincere. He loved his Master, and would have died with Him in Judea at the occasion of His raising Lazarus. His unbelief was of the head, and not of the heart, and so after eight long days, the Lord, on the occasion of a similar assembly, told Thomas to reach hither his finger, and behold His hand, and to reach hither his hand and thrust it into His side. He told him to gratify his desire to the full and to find every satisfaction for his greatest difficulty-to discover indeed, in those unclosed wounds, those everlasting evidences of redeeming love, the complete dissolution of the doubts of unbelief. Jesus said to Thomas, "Be not faithless, but believing." "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God."

Could patient grace or perfect love have done more? Signs could have been given and evidences produced! They are abundant. God could accomplish any external display. But if Thomas believed by seeing, they are more blessed who believe without seeing.

Israel will one day see and believe. We are called on now to the more blessed portion of believing apart from every evidence except the written Word of God. It suffices for God. Let it suffice for us.

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

A Thorn for the Flesh

The thorn for the flesh was needed when Paul came down from paradise. It was not that the flesh had improved. The thorn was something to hinder sin, something that made the Apostle outwardly contemptible in his ministry. Each believer probably has a different thorn according to his need. The flesh never changes, but the power of the Spirit of God is such that the flesh is kept down. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" would not be necessary if the flesh could improve. We should so walk through the wilderness with our flesh in the place of death, as it were.

God looks at us as dead with Christ, and we are called on to reckon ourselves dead. Our title to this claim is that Christ has died, and we are crucified with Him. It is not only that we are born of God, but we have died with Christ.

In Colossians 3 you find God seeing us as dead. In Romans 6 I reckon myself dead. In 2 Corinthians 4 it is "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." This is going very far indeed. Death to Paul was so realized that the life of Christ only worked in him.

Time to Stand

At the very gate of death, but with the judgment seat of Christ in view, the Apostle Paul wrote:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown." 2 Tim. 4:7, 8.

Fellow-Christian, would you be thus prepared to face the judgment seat of Christ, or would you delete or neutralize one or more elements in Paul's departing declaration?

Are you among those who in these evil times say, "This is a time to show love; we should not fight"? Do you feel that it is no longer necessary to "put on the whole armor of God" and to "take the sword of the Spirit" in a stand for God and His truth? Do you think that Satan has somehow gone to sleep and that it is no longer necessary to "stand against the wiles" of this master strategist? Do you equate love with compromise, with allowing apostasy to rise like a flood while you do little or nothing about it?

Have you dropped out of the race, no longer putting much energy into your service and testimony for Christ? Are you one of those who are so glad you are saved and have come to see the riches of God's grace, but will be unable to say at the close of life, "I have finished my course"? Do you feel that the time has passed when we should "keep the faith," that we should no longer be concerned about departures from the faith, since the Scriptures have predicted them anyway?

If your answers to these questions are wrong, then you will not receive the Lord's approval and reward "at that day." Why not read Paul's words again and ask yourself whether there needs to be some change in your thinking.

The Trend of the Times: a Word in Season

A Word in Season

We have a call in Isa. 51:1, issued to the Lord's people of another day, yet coming down to us: "Hearken to Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged."

In the business world it is often necessary to stop and take stock of one's operations to see whether these operations are on a sound basis or not. This is human prudence, but here we have a divine call for a similar course. In the New Testament we are told that the Rock so often mentioned in the Old Testament was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). We have a similar statement in Psalm 40:2, 3. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

Let us pause and consider. First, let us lift up our gaze and look "steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith" (Heb. 12:2 J.N.D. Trans.); then let us look backward and "remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh... that at that time ye were without Christ... having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. 2:11, 12. Is not this the pit from whence we have been digged? "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. 2:2.

In Gal. 1:4 we have the work of Christ brought before us in a twofold way. "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." He gave Himself for our sins, and then He also gave Himself to deliver us from this present evil "age." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one." 1 John 5:19; J.N.D. Trans.

Another has remarked that there are two great systems in this world: the one that belongs to the Father, and the other that belongs to Satan. We have a remarkable expression in Colossians 1:12-14: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." We learn from this that the child of God is no longer under the power of Satan as he once was; he has been delivered. But we learn elsewhere that he is still in the enemy's land and subject to Satan's wiles. The word is, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11), for we are told, "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." Rom. 6:16. At the time the New Testament was being written, the record is that some had "erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" 1 Tim. 6:10.

We are warned furthermore, "that in the last days perilous times shall come," and truly we are in the last days. Then further on we are told that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. 3:1, 13. Let us look somewhat into the ways of this arch deceiver, that his methods of operation may be understood so that we can "flee these things" 1 Tim. 6:11. His methods have been revealed to us; we are told that "we are not ignorant of his devices" 2 Cor. 2:11. The Apostle John, in the last-written book of the New Testament, gives us a remarkable summary of these operations. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:16. If we search the Scriptures we can see that it is these three things which are used on all that ever came into this earth. If we turn to Genesis 3, we will see that it was by these three things that man was overcome. "And when the woman saw that the [forbidden] tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Gen. 3:6.

Satan's method of approach is first to challenge - then to flatly contradict what had been said, and then to put forward to those who had given their ear to him what now seems to them something better than what God in His love and goodness had provided for His creatures. It has been remarked that Satan only puts forth half-truths; he said, That ye shall know good, but he did not say that they would lack the power to do it; then he said that they would know evil, but again he failed to put before them that they would lack the power to keep from evil. All through the Old Testament history we will be able to trace that when man walked in his own strength and intelligence and did not seek the wisdom from above, he was under one or more of these three things. However, it is not now my object to attempt to trace this, but to pass on to the One spoken of as the "second man, out of heaven." 1 Cor. 15:47; J.N.D. Trans. Moses and the prophets write of Him - the One who would glorify God where everyone else had failed. Immediately after His baptism, He "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil." Luke 4:1, 2. This did not take place in the "garden of delights" where God had placed the first man, but in a barren wilderness. We are not told what these temptations were, but when they were ended and after His fasting forty days, the devil came unto Him. Heaven at His baptism had opened unto Him, and a voice had announced, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." Luke 3:22. The devil brought before Him the same three things in the most seducing way that had ever been presented to a man, and, as stated above, the Apostle John tells us at the close of the New Testament, that these three things summarize all that is in the world. So we do well that we examine them carefully and prayerfully, that we may receive instruction.

We are also told that "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." 1 Pet. 4:7. The enemy knows this too, as his demons challenged the Lord when He was here, with "Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Matt. 8:29. His efforts are intensified as he approaches the time of the end. Rev. 12:12 brings this before us: "For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

If we examine these three temptations as brought before the Lord, we shall see a very subtle effort concealed in each of them. The first temptation was at the completion of His forty days' fast: "He afterward hungered." Satan suggests a way to appease His hunger and at the same time manifest His power as the Son of God. He intimates that there would be nothing wrong in satisfying His

hunger now that His fast was over, but the only begotten Son who was ever in the bosom of the Father came down from heaven not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him (John 6:38). To have listened to the wiles of the tempter would have taken Him out of the place of dependence on His Father. So He answers from the Word of God: "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Luke 4:4. Another has said that the Lord did not walk through this scene manifesting the glory that belonged to Him as the Son of God except on rare occasions, but there ever shone out moral glory, which could not be hid, that belonged to Him. He attracted to Himself those who labored and were heavy laden for the rest that He, in the path of the dependent Man from heaven, alone could give. That One was treading the path of faith and fulfilling the Word of God and so marking out a path in which to lead the "many sons unto glory." Heb. 2:10.

How does Satan now apply to the Lord's people this method which he tried out on the Lord, and which the Lord withstood? We are fast approaching the time spoken of in Rev. 13:17: "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." I do not doubt that to the natural man it will appear as a wonderful system of things, and it is being developed now.

John, in his first epistle, chapter 2:15, tells us to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." We are told that the word "world" used here expresses an "arranged age." It is the same expression used in Gal. 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is a world arranged by a masterful hand at deception. In Matthew 13, while men slept, the enemy sowed tares in among the good seed planted by the Sower. He would entice the people of God to mix with the tares in all their activities, that they might have a better time in this world. This would take them from the path of dependence into what Satan would fain have them believe is an easier path. "Man shall not live by bread alone," was the answer to this; that is, it was not His object in life to consider bodily needs first and to sacrifice the divine principles of the Word of God for sustaining life here. The Word of God was to be a lamp unto His feet and a light for His path.

The second temptation was to see if the Son of God could be lured from the path of dependence by the lust of the eyes. It is said that people are impressed far more by what they see than what they hear. Thus we can perceive how important what is brought before the eyes is to the tempter. He takes the Son of God to a very high mountain, as though he were doing Him a very special favor to bring Him into such a prominent place that He might have a favorable viewpoint, and "showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (Luke 4:5; in Matthew is added, "and the glory of them"). He promised, "All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them.... If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine." Luke 4:6,7. I suppose that there was never a more magnificent display of "the world" and "the things that are in the world," and we can say without any doubt that it will never be matched again by men or Satan. It is not necessary for him to give such a display to dazzle the eyes of the ordinary man. We are, however, fast approaching the time for the stepping up of displays to man. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2:8-10.

In a series of lectures on The Revelation delivered by J.N. Darby more than 100 years ago, he made this remark concerning this time of the end: "The miracles wrought by the spirits of demons are those which are so beyond the power of natural science to interpret that they cannot be understood in the age in which they are worked. A more advanced age might be able to understand them. The devil has uncommon knowledge of the resources of nature and science; they may be beyond the power of man to effect, but such a combination of natural things is within the reach of Satan." (Collected Writings, Vol. 34, page 336.)

The coming of the one called "the beast" is foretold in Revelation, and in chapter 13:3 is added, "All the world wondered after the beast." Again in verse 8: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Many have wondered in times past how the actions of this beast could be brought before the whole world to cause them to wonder at him. This is very apparent now in this stepped-up age, for by the aid of television all his acts which he wants to be seen can be brought into the homes in that day. He is training mankind to that end now, bringing into the homes in his enticements that part of the world he desires that they should see.

It will be noticed that when Satan brought before the Lord his masterpiece of the kingdoms of the world and their glory, that he did not bring before Him their poverty, oppression, misery, and corruption. That would not be in line with his methods of operation. His purpose has been at all times to deceive. Whether in the garden of Eden, or with the Lord on the high mountain, or in the living rooms of the present time, he never tells the complete story in connection with his allurements. Truly indeed he is manifesting himself more and more as the prince of the power of the air.

How did the Lord meet the deceiver? In the same way that His people can meet him now: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Luke 4:8. Do the world's enticements hinder worship of the Father? We are in the hour of which the Lord spoke in John 4:23, 24; "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The Apostle tells us in 1 John 4:6: "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Can there be the worship of the Father when partaking of the spirit of error? He also says in chapter 2:15: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The third temptation was the most subtle of all, for there he quotes scripture referring to the Messiah in an endeavor to lead Him from the path as a dependent Man to have Him make a demonstration before all as to who He was. But Satan omitted part of the quotation when he said, "He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee [in all Thy ways]: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." Luke 4:10,11. To have heeded this temptation would have taken Him out of the ways of the Messiah marked out in the Word, and would have placed Him in the ways of Satan. But the spring of the pride of life was not there in the One "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26), and His answer given in Matthew 4:7 is, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

It is well to bear this in mind when the tempter, his agents or ministers, quote Scripture, that it is written again. Satan is ever ready to seduce by disassociating Scripture from its proper connection. If the lust of the eyes is to further the manifestation of the beast referred to above, the pride of life is to bring about the training necessary to produce him and to train the world to accept him when he does come. "And they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" Rev. 13:4, 5.

A great deal of emphasis has been laid on the promoting of self-expression in child training, to the disregard of the teaching of the best Book that was ever written on child training - the Holy Scriptures. Some alarm has been voiced by those who have had to cope with the problems of juvenile delinquency, as to where this sort of training is going to end. The prince of the power of the air has his program and he knows where he wants it to lead.

In closing, a scripture comes to mind of a parallel in a yet future day. We have a woman brought before us in Revelation 12 who no doubt is Israel of a past and a future day and she is to endure great persecutions. "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." Rev. 12:14-16. The Church also is looked at as a woman in 2 Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:23-32, and Rev. 21:9. Let us look at 2 Cor. 11:2, 3: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Does it not look as though the "prince of the power of the air" is casting "out of his mouth... a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood"?

It is necessary that the bulwarks of Scripture be erected that this flood might be diverted into channels that the earth might swallow it up. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." Psalm 48:12, 13. In one sense, if the flood is not diverted, there will be none left to tell it to the generation following. The Lord may have to use "the stranger from a far land" to pass the story of His grace on to the "generation following," for if He tarries, He has a story to be told, and it will be told. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." 2 Pet. 3:17, 18.

We Would See Jesus and We See Jesus

It was preparation time in Jerusalem, for the great feast of the Passover was at hand, and Jews from all over the Palestinian area were assembling for the feast. Little did they know that for faith this would be the last Passover. That which had been inaugurated at Israel's deliverance from Egypt had really looked forward through the centuries to the death of the "Lamb of God." God would "provide Himself a lamb." Now the time had come, and the Lord said to His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer"-that Passover to which all others looked forward. The type was now to meet its antitype, and He to whom the passover lamb had pointed was there to die on that Passover day. He had earnestly desired to eat that Passover with them before the type would be fulfilled in His death.

Strange things had been taking place in Jerusalem at that time. The Lord had been acclaimed as the "Son of David" when He had ridden into Jerusalem on the ass's colt (John 12:13-15). Many had strewn palm branches before Him, and He had been hailed as the "King of Israel" according to the prophecy in Zech. 9:9, but at the same time He was rejected. The Jewish leaders had decided on a course of getting rid of Him by any means, and were ready also to put Lazarus to death, because many of the Jews believed on Jesus when they saw Lazarus alive who had been dead.

In the midst of this undisguised hatred of the Lord Jesus, there was, however, one bright note. Some Greeks had come up to worship at the feast. "The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired of him saying, Sir, we would see Jesus." This pleased Philip, and he sought Andrew to tell him the good news-if the Jewish authorities rejected their Lord, there were Greeks who desired to see Him. To their uninstructed thoughts, this seemed like a notable honor for Him, so they went and told Jesus.

"And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a [rather, the] corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:23, 24. He was not then to be honored by admiring Greeks, but to be glorified by going into death and coming forth as the head of a new creation. An entirely new harvest was to be the result of His death and resurrection.

We are never told that the Greeks got to see Jesus, but a very important truth was disclosed to the two Apostles. The Lord Jesus had been rejected as Israel's Messiah, and He now took that title of rejection, the "Son of man." It was a much broader title, for under that title He suffered and under it He will reign over all. He will not merely reign as Messiah over Israel, but, as Son of man, He will have all things put under Him (see Psalm 8).

Furthermore, there was no blessing for the Greeks in a Messiah on earth; as such He would have blessed Israel, but they had refused Him. He was now about to die on the cross and rise again. He was to lay the foundation for blessing to mankind of every race-"whosoever will." But the true grain of wheat had to fall into the ground and die, or else remain alone. Jews and Greeks were alike ruined by sin, and His sacrificial death was a necessity if He were to have companions in that

scene of glory into which He was to enter. He could have gone straight back into the glory from which He came, but it would have been alone had He not first gone down into death. All the redeemed in heaven and on earth at a later date, will be the trophies of His death and resurrection. He will have much fruit as the result of His dying on the cross. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isa. 53:11. What an abundance of fruit there will be from the death He suffered, and from which He arose the mighty victor!

Let us now turn to Hebrews 2. In this chapter His supremacy over all is decreed, and the 8th Psalm is quoted, to which allusion has already been made. He is to have that dominion given to Him by God as the Son of man. He is called Son of man for the first time in that Psalm. But in Hebrews 2 it is further stated that He has not yet received His dominion. Not everything has been put under Him at this time, but, as surely as God has spoken, so it will be done. But for us, at present, "We see Jesus." How? As the Greeks wanted to see Him as a living man on earth? NO. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. "

By faith we look up into heaven and see the Lord Jesus at God's right hand, where He ever lives for us. He is there now in the presence of God for us, and we are accepted before God in all the favor of His beloved Son. What a privilege we have by faith! It is no longer Christ as a man on earth, it is not even Him on the cross, nor is it Christ risen and on earth, but we look up to the ascended glorious One. Truly, by faith, "We see Jesus... crowned."

Many Christians seem never to get beyond the cross. They always speak of sitting at the foot of the cross. But our blessed Savior is not on the cross, nor in the tomb, but in the glory of God's presence. When the prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, the "sons of the prophets"-the students of the prophets-sent fifty strong men to find him on earth, but failed in their attempt. Many would still find a living Jesus on earth, and those who only speak of His example and teachings do not know His death, resurrection, or present glory. The Apostle could say, "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. We have a glorious Savior, of whom it is testified "that He liveth."

None of the religions of earth, except true Christianity, has a living head in the glory of God. Mohammed is dead, and so are countless others who propounded a theory of religion. Those Greeks were ignorant when they desired to see a living Christ, evidently expecting to see some miracle or to receive a blessing; their blessing could only come through His death and resurrection. But for people today to stop short of His death, resurrection, and glorification at God's right hand, is to deny the very basis of Christianity and the reality of the saved sinner's blessing in Him now. That is why there is so much enfeebled Christianity today, and so little of the believer's walking in the enjoyment of Him and all the fruits of His victory. True enjoyment of Christ, as and where He is, makes for more heavenly-mindedness and less worldliness.

Many people do not understand that Christianity proper did not begin until Christ was received in the glory of God, and the Holy Spirit came down to indwell believers. It has been well said that Christianity began on the other side of the cloud that received Him out of their sight, while His death and resurrection as the true grain of wheat laid the foundation for the abundant crop of the new creation.

May God grant us to have a deeper sense of the necessity of His death and resurrection, of His present place in the glory of God, and to dwell in the enjoyment of our place in Christ in that glory. May the Man who is now in the glory of God's presence fill our hearts with wonder and praise. And the more we contemplate Him there, the more we shall live in moral conformity to Him now. The moment is coming when we shall actually "see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2)-not as He was on earth before, but as He is now. Then we shall be fully conformed to His image, and shall have bodies of glory like His.

What's Going on?

The above three words can be a statement or they can be a question. Our intention is to take them up as a statement although sometimes we will have to stop and ask, "What is going on?"

We live in such very interesting times and the things that are going on today very often relate to something found in the Bible, the Word of God. We know that God has His plan for the earth and that nothing can hinder the full accomplishment of everything He has purposed. All will be fulfilled.

In Psalm 132 we find, "The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation." He further says, "This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." vv.13,14. This place is the center of the earth in God's purposes. The four directions, north, east, south, and west relate to Jerusalem. Zion is one of its hills.

To the north of Israel at the present time, there is much going on in Lebanon and Syria. A little farther to the north is another country that is beginning to stir and make its importance known in the world. We refer to TURKEY, a large country in both area and population.

The three-and-one-half year war in the Persian Gulf has been escalating instead of diminishing to the consternation of all the surrounding nations. Some of these nations would very much like to act as peacemakers but because of not having been neutral or lacking credibility are not in a position to do so. Turkey has kept herself strictly neutral in the war between Iran and Iraq. She has a large economic trade with each nation so is in quite a favorable position to act as peacemaker if some kind of settlement can be negotiated.

The Turkish Prime Minister, Turgut Ozal, visited Iraq in April and Iran in May. The primary reason was to discuss economic issues, but it also shows Turkey's desire to project herself as the only credible peacemaker in that area.

Of what interest are these things to the Christian today? Those who are looking for glory to come to the Lord Jesus Christ know that there are certain events to take place before He shall have His rightful place here on earth. Matt. 24:32 says, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree." Luke 21:29 says, "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees." In these scriptures trees are symbols of nations and the fig tree is Israel who of late years is again a nation after centuries with no territory at all.

We know from Daniel 11 and other scriptures that there is to be a great nation to the south of Israel and one to the north. For some few years now Egypt has been gaining strength after years of much weakness and so seems ready to fulfill her place in prophecy. The king of the south will be from Egypt.

Syria to the north of Israel has gained prominence lately. She and Iraq are armed by Russia. It is likely that the power to the north at first will be close to Israel and include more than just Syria. It may be that both Turkey and Iraq or parts of them will be involved in that power to the north.

These events now shaping up the nations for the judgments that precede the millennial kingdom are surely strong indications of the nearness of the Lord's coming.

The apostle Peter, when writing about coming things, left us this exhortation, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 2 Pet. 3:11. It is important for us then to learn by what is taking place amongst the nations, particularly around Jerusalem, and to live as those who belong to Christ now. It may be that because of this we suffer reproach and tribulation, but if it is for the name of Christ the answer is in 1 Pet. 4:14, "Happy are ye." Then it adds, "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

Fellow believer, can we not also apply that wonderful verse in Luke 21:28? "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

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