

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 38

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 38, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

101 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 38

1 John 2:15

Even if we do not cling to the world, how it clings to us 1 If Christ had His place in our hearts it could not. If it were last night that the Lord Jesus had been put to death by the world, would any of us be "hail fellows well met"? What matters if it were last night or over 1900 years ago. Some are insisting on belonging to this world and to Christ, too. Christ had nothing in this world, and my business is to pass through it as earnestly and as fast as I can.

Some Typical Teachings on 2 Kings 4

The stories in this portion of God's Word, when read in the light of the New Testament, teach us of forgiveness and life for the sinner and of Christ's sufficiency for the believer.

The widow's oil is a proverb of exhaustless supply, and is a fit emblem of divine grace. The empty vessels in her house illustrate needy hearts, for the oil lasted as long as there was one vessel to be filled, whether large or small. Well may we say of our need, whatever it be, that God's grace can meet it. The greater our need, the more is God's grace magnified by meeting it. The larger the vessel, the more wonderful seemed the little jar of oil as the widow poured out from it. How her poor heart would rise up blessing Jehovah as she saw vessel after vessel filled as full as each could hold with the ceaseless oil!

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

But how did the widow come to know the richness of the pot of oil? Her sons were about to be sold for debt; she had no possible way of delivering herself or them; her creditor was at the door, and, having "nothing to pay," the foreclosure was before her eyes. In her depths of distress the poor, bankrupt woman went to Elisha, the man of God, from whom she learned that (as Elisha's name signifies) God is salvation.

Of all lessons, the sweetest to learn in the heart is that God is salvation! Do we need forgiveness of the debt of our sins? Do we owe the five hundred pence, or the fifty? God is salvation! When the debtors had "nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Look well over your religious stores; what have you left? If your answer is: "I am destitute; I have not one good work, not one worthy desire, not one holy prayer, in fact, should justice put in its claim, I am hopelessly lost, and must be sold into endless captivity," then you are in the same circumstances as the widow. There is still the pot of oil, still His boundless grace to meet all your need. Your need calls forth His grace.

God forgives us our sins upon the principle of grace, through Jesus, whose blood was shed.

God's salvation is not mere kindness. It is indeed kindness to love us as He does, but righteousness as well as kindness is to be found in God's forgiveness, since it is only in Jesus that we obtain forgiveness, only in Him who died for our sins, only by His precious blood that "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Eph. 1:7.

God can now forgive, and yet uphold His own righteousness. The cross and the blood of His dear Son testify to God's holiness as nothing else can, for, were He to punish every sinner forever, even that would not show His hatred of sin as does the blood of His Son. Since Jesus has satisfied the claims of His holiness, God's righteousness is shown out by His forgiving guilty sinners who trust in Jesus and in His blood.

The widow found something beyond having her debts paid in God's grace toward her. She had more than enough. After her debts were paid, there was still a fund of riches in her hand. What was she to do with it? Live upon it, was the divine word. Live in the famine-stricken land upon the

unmerited bounty of God! Very precious to the saved sinner's heart is the knowledge that he is not only saved by grace, but that so long as he tarries in this sin-stricken world (a world where there is a mighty famine of all that sustains the soul), he has God's grace to live upon.

Do not let us limit God's grace to the forgiveness of sins. Just suppose the poor widow and her sons had been freed from the creditor's hand, and saved from bondage, and yet had not a penny to carry them through the years of famine. What a mercy to be saved, we might say; yes, but would such a salvation answer to the character of God? Far from it. And while we are certainly saved from all our sins, each one being forever forgiven when we believe in Him who died for us, there is also a boundless supply for each hour of our lives; there is a fullness which our wants can never exhaust, and the Lord delights in our making Him our resource at all times, drawing from His treasury, so that we may say, "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace [grace heaped upon grace]." John 1:16.

LIFE IN CHRIST

Shall we stop at forgiveness? Shall we stop at that grace which follows us to the end of our earthly journey? Is the Christian only like a ransomed prisoner with a fund of riches to meet all his wants to the day of his death? Far be the thought. We are much more than forgiven; we are the possessors of everlasting life. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23. Jesus not only died for our sins, He rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). His blood blotted out our countless crimes; He is our life. Bad as it is to be in debt, it is worse to be dead. And we are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). If we are saved by God's salvation, it is both forgiveness and life for us.

The mother of Shunem had death in her house; the child of her desires lay lifeless upon his bed. Who could meet this extremity? Who but the living God could give life? Life is God's gift. When Adam was formed out of the dust, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). The hardest strivings and bitterest tears could not bring back her son's life; this she knew, but she knew more. She knew that Elisha, Jehovah's servant, if it were Jehovah's will, could bring her child back to life. She had "faith in God." She could say, "It is well," knowing that God can raise the dead.

The Shunammite went straight to Jehovah's prophet. "Drive, and go forward," she said; "slack not thy riding for me." This was the energy of faith. And when Elisha inquired how it was with her, she said, in the calmness of faith, "It is well."

The prophet came down to her child (as God's salvation comes to us), down to the very place where he was. Elisha lay upon the dead child; his mouth, his hands, touched the lifeless body. But Jesus has taken our place actually, our very place; He died on the cross; He went down into the grave for us. Have you considered His stoop, from the glory to the grave? Have you pondered His work, the maker of all worlds as a man lying dead in the tomb? Only by Him do we obtain life: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23. His blood cleanses all our sins away.

We see the little chamber where the dead child lies, but our God can raise him up. Should it be difficult to believe that God gives dead sinners new and everlasting life? Yet due to the hardness of our hearts we find it difficult to believe that we are "dead in trespasses and sins."

The joy of the mother when she clasped her living child to her bosom was deeper than the rich joy of the widow who had the money in her hand to pay her debt and deliver her sons from bondage. Surely there is a fuller joy when we know the gift of God which is eternal life than even when we know that we are forgiven all our sins through the precious blood of Christ.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

However blessed it is to be assured of the forgiveness of our sins, and to know that we have everlasting life in Christ, yet there is something beyond this that belongs to God's people.

Man's view of the world and of heaven changes as soon as he knows Jesus. The world in his eyes is desolation and heaven is his home. But whether the believer regards himself as a pilgrim traveling homeward through a scene of desolation, or whether he realizes his position in heaven in Christ, he equally needs the sufficiency, the sustaining grace, of Jesus Himself.

There is a famine on earth, and let the believer turn whatever way he will, there is not a particle of nourishment for his soul to be gathered from the earth; the whole of his spiritual food is heavenly, the bread of God, which is Christ Himself. At the present time man gathers for his need (as did the sons of the prophets in the dearth - vv. 38,39) whatever his hands may find; each goes to search for some good and pleasant thing. But sooner or later comes the woeful discovery that death has spoiled the sweetest things. When a man makes this discovery, he is apt to cry out with the sons of the prophets: "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot." Death in the pleasantest, in the loveliest, in the dearest things of earth, death within the family, behind the rosy cheek of childhood, within the frame of strong manhood, upon the gray hairs of age; death in business, in the household; death everywhere, in everything on earth. Heartbreaking discovery! Oh, who can eat of the things of life and earth! Who can endure its sorrows! "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof."

And how did death come into the world? Sin entered, and death by sin; this knowledge, when the heart that hates sin discovers it as applied to himself, is bitter indeed.

What is the remedy? How shall we go through life's sorrows and tears? The man of God gives the sons of the prophets the remedy. Is there death? "Then bring meal." Now, meal is a figure of Christ as a man on earth, and when we know Him in His tenderness and sympathy, when we consider Him who has gone through every bitter sorrow that the human heart ever felt, then as the sons of the prophets could eat of the food which had death in it (for when the meal was put into the poisoned food, there was "no harm" in it), so can we pass through all the bitter things of our earthly way and find them sweet; all will be sweet which once was bitter, when Jesus is known - pain, sorrow, death, will all lose their bitterness.

Beloved fellow-Christian, there is more in Christ than a sweetening of your bitter circumstances, more than friendship and sympathy for you as a tired soul on earth, for Christ is not here any longer. His feet have left this weary scene. You may trace the imprint of His steps as the Holy Ghost has recorded them in God's Word, but Jesus Himself is risen. He has passed through death and has reached the land of glory; He has left the sorrowful land and has sat down in the home of unmingled joy, and His fullness in that rich place is yours.

The sons of the prophets ate of the loaves of the firstfruits, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord God. There was an abundance in the supply which went beyond their need, for the supply was after Jehovah's measure.

The loaves of the firstfruits, the earnest of the harvest, the promise of coming abundance, tell us of our risen Lord. Christ the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:23) is evidence of the end of the famine. Now let our souls feed upon Him and feeding spiritually upon our risen Lord Jesus, let us know by the power of His Spirit of that fullness which far exceeds our earthly wants. Let us be satisfied with that fullness which is exhaustless, which is heavenly, after the measure of the love, grace and power of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Absolutes of God

A teacher made a remark once that often comes to mind these days. After having heard of his need of the Savior, he remarked, "You cannot be sure of the things of which you speak, as there are no absolutes. Everything is relative." He went on to tell of the "gray areas" of life, in which it is impossible to know with accuracy what is true.

It makes my heart sing to think of the absolutes of God. We are not left in the world to wander about in "gray areas," indecision, "ifs" or "maybes," or in our own experiences and opinions. As those who have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, have we taken time today to thank God for the faith to know and be persuaded of His verities? Have we paused to thank Him for the Scriptures which present the Savior simply and clearly as the only One able to meet our need? Have we thanked Him for a Book which gives clear answers and principles for every question, problem or trial with which we shall ever be confronted?

It is a grand thing to rest upon the absolutes of God: It is this which lifts the believer's spirit, and gives settled peace in a turbulent world. This confidence in God's Word is the very thing Satan has attempted to undermine from the beginning, when he posed the subtle question to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" This implies that God hasn't really spoken to mankind; we are free to live independently of Him. The political, economic and moral conditions in the world today reflect the tragic results of man's refusal of God's absolutes.

Nowhere else are the great questions of life unlocked but in the Holy Scriptures. The look of faith will find our relationship with a loving God, our purpose for being on planet earth, our eternal destiny. Indeed, our hearts ought to be full of praise for His love in revealing His mind to us.

When God's absolutes arrest us, we are led to the very Person and presence of our Lord Himself. Sadly true for many of us is the fact that too often our lives give evidence that this is not our experience. We readily receive the promises and assurances of God's Word, but give less attention to His commands. Yet for blessing, the latter is linked to the former.

The New Testament's one proof of love is obedience. Our Lord's words come to mind, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." John 14:23. This is a consistent absolute throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament we are taught that God prefers loving obedience to the many sacrifices we might bring or make (1 Sam. 15:22).

God has not saved us merely for our pleasure, but that we might become conformed, not to this world, but to His Son (Rom. 8:29). Yet many of us are scarcely distinguishable from the world that rejects Him. Is there a lack of apprehension of what it cost our Lord Jesus to rescue us by His atoning work on the cross? Have our habits, attitudes and lifestyle become so enmeshed with the spirit of the world that the freshness of first love is no more than a dull memory? Have we forgotten the great absolute of Scripture, "Ye are not your own.... Ye are bought with a price" 1 Cor. 6:19,20? Have we been for so long accustomed to following Jesus afar off, and to living among those who follow Him afar off, that we are unaware of our poverty of spirit?

To enjoy and be consistent with the absolutes of the Word of God, we must give more than a casual assent to New Testament Christianity. It must possess our hearts and affect our entire manner of life, as well. Separation, obedience, humility, simplicity, modesty, self-control, and cross-bearing must be made a living part of our everyday conduct, and come fully under the control and authority of our risen Lord. There is no other course open to those who claim His name, and desire to testify of Him, and experience blessing in their lives.

According to the New Testament, the true Church is composed of regenerated, forgiven sinners who differ from all other human beings in that we have received a superior kind of life imparted to us at the time of receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We are children of God in a sense not true of other created beings. Our origin is divine, and our citizenship is in heaven. We worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. We have espoused the cause of a rejected and crucified Man who has pledged that He will return soon to take us home to the Father's house (John 14:1-3).

In the meantime, we carry His cross, suffer whatever indignities men may heap upon us for His sake, act as His ambassadors, and do good to all men in His name. And - praise God - our Lord provides the power and means for all.

Another of God's verities is that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12. The Scriptures promise no immunity from persecution as long as the Church is on the earth. This is what we must expect. Those who may not be called upon to face the firing squad or the concentration camp, will nevertheless be confronted with the world's hatred, The weapon of ridicule - the sneer, the snide remark - claims its conquests for the power of evil as well as physical attacks.

In a day like ours, persecution may make the mind its target rather than the body. How imperative then for us to clothe ourselves in the whole armor of God.

How blessed it is that we can plant our feet upon the Rock in the midst of a sinking, drifting world, and grasp whole-heartedly the absolutes of the Word of God. And who can estimate, my dear friends, the results if we would throw ourselves down before Him with an open Bible, and cry, "Behold Thy servant, Lord! Be it even unto me even as Thou wilt."

Advocacy Now, Soon the Father's House

It is very common, even among the children of God, to confound the Christian hope with prophecy. Scripture, however, gives no countenance to anything so lowering to the heavenly calling, though prophecy is a very important part of Scripture, either directly or indirectly (as in the book of Genesis). All the blessings of a converted soul in the days of Genesis lay in the future, so that it is not in order to disparage prophecy that I claim a higher place for the Christian hope. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. It was so in the Old Testament days, and will be again. The more we distinguish that which is for the earth from that which is for heaven, the more honor we give not merely to the heavenly, but also to the earthly. God's purpose is to bring both earth and heaven under the Lord Jesus. The great mistake is to make the earth the scene of the Lord's being peculiarly glorified, and the saints with Him. For the earth is what God intends for Israel. They are the people to be exalted in the earth. There is not one part of the universe (I do not speak of that awful but suited vision throughout eternity of the lake of fire) in all the scene of blessing but will be under the direct control of the Lord Jesus. But as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are the heavenly blessings than the earthly.

God means to bless every family of the earth. It was the promise given to Israel. But what about saints raised from the dead and glorified? To have them destined for the earth is a terrible blunder. It is a sorrowful thing that any saint could look for a place on earth when a heavenly hope is made known. The effect is to blot out Israel's portion (which can not fail) and to lose all sense of heavenly glory into which Christ is gone, and gone as our forerunner.

Now it will help if you know the context of the words read (John 14:1-3) for you are never sure you have the real truth if you take a few words by themselves. But if the surroundings are of a similar character, they strengthen the true meaning. From the beginning of John 13, the Lord opened out the entirely new character of Christianity - that which follows His total rejection by Israel. The great doctrine of the Gospel of John is that we are children of God and know it and are now fitted to enjoy it. The Apostle Paul, who says we are to bear the image of the heavenly when Christ comes, also says we are heavenly now. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. 15:49. John 13 brings before us a most remarkable act on the part of our Lord. It begins with the intimation that He was going to leave them, for the chapter opens with the statement, "When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father," etc. - that is the way His departure is looked at, not that He should die, though He was going to die. It proceeds, "and during supper... Jesus knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands... rises from supper." (JND). Here is a very remarkable thing, though we might pass over it as nothing peculiar. Jesus is here not looking for the throne of David, for Jerusalem, and the land - all is to be given Him by-and-by. That is what God will do for His beloved Son who by His death not only reconciles the creature to the Creator, but glorifies God about that in which He had been so dishonored. But now that the Lord Jesus (viewed here as no longer in the world where we still are) is gone to the Father, He devotes Himself on high that we, while walking here, may nevertheless by His advocacy there, be maintained in blessed

communion with Him now glorified. This is to have "part with Him," and is effected by His cleansing our feet from the defilement of the way by "the washing of water by the Word."

In these chapters the Spirit of God gives a far deeper account of that which never had been revealed in the Old Testament. What! The Messiah wash our feet! There is nothing in the Old Testament Scriptures nor in the heart of man to prepare for such a thing, and it astonished the disciples; it astonished Peter. Peter had part in Christ, eternal life in Christ, but the Lord would give him part with Christ, that is, communion with Him in heaven while still walking down here on earth. Christianity is not only our being born of the Spirit; the Old Testament saints were that, though they did not know it. They rested on the coming Savior, and there is nothing good for God without that, without faith. What is needed is that which is of God. We are called to acknowledge the utter ruin of all that is of ourselves. This is repentance - taking part with God's righteousness and holiness against myself. But this is negative; faith gives us the positive - the Lord Jesus. He presses on Peter the necessity of washing his feet, not his whole body, for if a man is regenerate by being born of water and of the Spirit, that is done once; there is no repetition, as there is none of the death of Christ.

Washing of feet cleans from the defilement of our walk. Is that nothing? or am I merely to fall back on forgiveness of sins through His blood? It is as Advocate He washes our feet. The advocacy is one grand characteristic of Christianity. His priesthood is quite distinct. As Priest, He strengthens us against the enemy, but if we break down, His advocacy comes in. What makes a man repent? Not sinning, that hardens. It is an Advocate with the Father. Not with God - God is the Judge of sin - but with the Father, for we are children of God.

In the case of Peter we see the Advocate. He was warned not to enter into temptation. The Lord endured temptation. That is very different from entering into it. But Peter, bold enough to get into the difficulty, failed, and when he denied the Lord, the Lord looked upon Peter; then Peter remembered. This is a little specimen before the time of advocacy. It is eminently belonging to the Christian. Though Christianity rests on Christ's death, it is characterized by His resurrection and ascension - all facts. There is nothing so simple as a fact, but these facts are the groundwork of all the truths of Christianity.

The same chapter also shows the death of Christ in quite a different way from Isaiah 53 or Psalm 22. Judas went out to betray the Lord, "and it was night"; he was going into the deepest darkness that a poor soul could enter -going to sell the Lord for the price of a slave! What does the Lord say? "Now is the Son of man glorified." What! by being crucified? Yes. There is no glory so bright as moral glory. It was an easy thing for God to give the Lord Jesus actual glory, but it was no easy thing for Christ to suffer. In His sufferings, God was glorified, not as Father, but as God, the Judge of sin; that insoluble question was about to be settled for all eternity! The Father had been glorified in all the life of Jesus; He was His delight. Christ, who by His love, humility, and entire obedience had glorified Him in good, had now to glorify Him about all that was bad. "If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." That is what He has done. God having set Him, not on the throne of David, but on the throne of God, where no man can sit but Himself, He is there as man, but if He were one hair's breath less God than the Father, there could be no Christianity.

He is glorified in Himself - that brings in Christianity. The Holy Spirit is sent down from Christ in glory, and every one who truly believes is "one spirit with the Lord," and this leads me into my subject. "Let not your heart be troubled." It seemed one of the greatest troubles that He was going to leave them, but He says, as it were, You ought to rejoice if you care for Me, for I am going to the Father, but I am going to care for you in a way impossible otherwise. "Ye believe in God," though you never saw God; "believe also in Me," when you no longer see Me. Thomas gives a good sample of the Jew, but "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Who are they? Those who, unlike Thomas, believe on Him before they see Him, though it was precious also to see Him, for His life lays the foundation for love of His Person. "In My Father's house." The temple was entirely too low. What can match the Father's house? the description of that place where God the Father shows His delight in His Son 1 Here is the blessed hope - room for you all - room for every Christian - room for you to be "with Me." In all heaven there is but one Father's house, only one place worthy of the Son, and, says the Lord, I am going to have you with Myself. They are to be "with Me." Prophetic scriptures are connected with Israel's hope. Association with Christ is ours now, and by a tie that cannot be broken - the Holy Spirit.

Every member of Christ's body will be there - a matter entirely of sovereign grace, though there will be reward according to faithfulness.

Against the Tide

Do you sometimes feel, young person, as if you are standing alone in your classroom, in your home, among your friends? If you are one of God's dear children, saved by Jesus' precious blood, then you are walking on the narrow road. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matt. 7:14. You have chosen to be with the few, and this choice involves a life of separation unto God. But separation is not a popular topic, especially for young people who want to be a part of the crowd and who are under great pressure by their friends and loved ones to conform.

If our love for Christ is what it should be, separation will be for us a positive action, never negative. As we study the Bible, we find that Christians are to be separate from the world and from sin. As individual believers, we are IN the world, but we are not OF the world system. We have important decisions to make because of this. There will be times when we will have to decide NOT to go with the crowd, because there are some things we as God's people should not do. We may be tempted to listen to unwholesome talk, to smoke, to take drugs or strong drink, to go to places of entertainment not fit for a Christian, or to fellowship with a group that would not be helpful. But those who have been born again have nothing in common with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). Christians are to be separated to Christ, "that they... should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:15.

We may often find it necessary to mix with unsaved people in the business realm, but we are never to mingle at the spiritual level. Scripture admonishes us that those who abide not in the doctrine of Christ are not to be received into our homes (2 John 1:10, 11). Many passages in the Bible warn us about those who are counterfeit Christians and false teachers, and we are not to have anything to do with them.

Separation unto Christ will give us no problem in our Christian lives if our heart attitude is right. We can sum it all up by quoting 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."

The Ministry of the Apostle Paul

"A light to lighten the Gentiles" was part of old Simeon's announcement in the sacred enclosure of the temple (Luke 2:32). For a moment he held in his arms the Babe of whom the prophets had spoken. He saw God's salvation and was satisfied. Years, however, had to pass before his prophetic words received a fuller accomplishment.

The Child grew and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. He commenced His ministry on earth, called people around Him, ate with sinners and sent forth laborers to preach, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were charged on no account to overstep the line which divided them from the Gentiles. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" was His peremptory command (Matt. 10:5), for He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24). How fully the Syrophenician woman felt the barrier that existed between her, of the race of Canaan, and the children of Israel, the former conquerors of the land. The centurion, too, though probably one of the conquering race of his day, and holding office in the Roman army which garrisoned the country, acknowledged that privileges in which he did not share belonged by birth to the people of Israel. So he sent the elders of the synagogue to ask the Lord to heal his servant who was sick (Luke 7:2, 3). Before the cross, no mission was sent to the Gentiles.

On the day of the Lord's resurrection He announced to His disciples that Gentiles were not to be excluded from the blessing they were commissioned to proclaim. The day of Pentecost came, Jews and proselytes heard the word, and three thousand were converted and sealed. No Gentile was yet evangelized, however, though God that day announced by Peter, in words perhaps not then understood, His determination to bless Gentiles equally with souls of the house of Israel. "The promise," said Peter, "is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39. But this divine purpose was still awaiting fulfillment.

The time for its accomplishment now drew near. Peter, who had made the announcement and had quoted Joel's prophecy which was in harmony with it, the keys of the kingdom having been committed to him by the Lord (Matt. 16:19), used them to open the door to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. But as yet the Apostle of the Gentiles was unknown to the apostles. The hour having come, however, for Gentiles to be saved and to be made one with those who had been Jews, the servant especially chosen to evangelize them was converted. Until that time he had been most zealous for the law, and the determined opponent of the Lord Jesus and His disciples. He, Paul, now became a most marked example of grace, and was a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel (Acts 9:15). While still on the ground near Damascus, Paul, separated for that work from the womb (Gal. 1:15, 16), was made acquainted by Christ Himself with the special service to which he was appointed (Acts 26:16, 17). Still the hour was not yet come for him to go forth on that mission. Later on, in the temple at Jerusalem, while in a trance, he received his instructions to depart unto the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). Henceforth he was to be known as their apostle (Rom. 11:13).

What a mission was this! Gentiles, as such, formed the special sphere of his work, a sphere bounded only by the confines of the habitable earth in its truest and widest sense. The Romans viewed their empire as reaching the boundaries of the habitable earth (Luke 2:1). The limits of Paul's field of labors reached far beyond that. Wherever any of the human race were found who were not of the seed of Jacob, Paul was commissioned to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. What a field, and what a message! Grace was thus displayed in a double way. Paul was a most wonderful example of grace. The persecutor of the Church, most zealous for the law, became the most ardent champion of grace and the conserver of the liberty of those who had once been Gentiles (Gal. 5:1). Paul as well as the eleven could go to the Jews. However, his special work was among Gentiles, who were no longer hidden in darkness as outside the circle of divine favor. Those once far off shared in it equally with those who were nigh (Eph. 2:13).

But Paul had another line of service entrusted to him, and the field for that was only bounded by the

number of the true saints of God on earth. It was

given to him "to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things." Eph. 3:9 J.N.D. Trans. For evangelistic purposes the Gentiles were Paul's field of labor; for teaching the dispensation of the Mystery, he was to have all saints as his audience. Paul was a minister of the gospel and a minister of the Church (Col. 1:23-25). Wherever a Gentile was found, there was one to whom Paul could preach the unsearchable riches of the Christ. Wherever a saint was met with, there was one whom he was to enlighten as to the dispensation of the mystery, till then hid in God who created all things.

Gentiles heard the glad tidings and rejoiced (Acts 13:48). Saints too must have received with interest the unfolding of the dispensation of the mystery. Has every Christian who reads these lines entered into something of what this second ministry of Paul really was? There was a mystery, now revealed, which concerned equally all the saints of God. Are all willing to hear about it, and to be instructed in it? But are only human beings interested in it? It is true, they alone share in the blessings connected with it. There is, however, another order of beings who feel an interest in the unfolding of it, namely, the angelic powers in the heavenlies, who learn by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

What scenes have they witnessed! They saw earth emerge out of chaos at the command of the Almighty, and prepared by Him for the introduction into this scene of an entirely new creature - man - who was created on the sixth day (Gen. 1:27). They attended God at the giving of the law (Acts 7:53). The heavenly group praised God at the birth of the Lord Jesus. They ministered to Him in the wilderness; one of them strengthened Him in the garden. He was seen of angels while in life; His tomb was watched by them after His resurrection. He whom they worshipped and obeyed as God, they saw in human form as a man, and witnessed His death on the cross. They were familiar with the creation of man, the incarnation of the Son of God, His life of dependence on God and His death of shame and suffering. But now a new thing was disclosed to them by the Church. He as man was Head in heaven of a body which was on earth, united to Him in the closest way. Of this wonderful truth the angels learned from the Church of God. He had ascended up to heaven, angels, authorities and powers being made subject to Him and those very angelic

powers learned that as man He was not complete without His body.

What a ministry then was that which was entrusted to Paul, concerning all Gentiles, all saints, and all angels. To no one else was such grace given. How fully Paul felt the grace of it! How far has each true Christian understood and entered into the subjects of it?

Beginning of the Creation of God

"What does 'the beginning of the creation of God' (Rev. 3:14) mean? Jehovah's Witnesses use it to try to prove that Christ was a created being. Is there a better translation of this?"

Answer: The above translation of Rev. 3:14, as quoted from the King James translation, is good, and true to the original text. It is really a statement of transcendent beauty when seen in its proper connection and meaning. It is found in the Lord's address to the church in Laodicea - that church which depicts the last stage of Christendom - which had given up the Church's heavenly calling and had assumed a great place on earth. By their own estimation they were "rich, and increased with goods," and had "need of nothing," albeit Christ was standing outside. They were the very antithesis of Him whom they were to represent down here. Therefore the Lord presents Himself as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness." He was everything that the Church should have been, but was not.

"All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen." 2 Cor. 1:20. Every promise was affirmed in Him, and will be confirmed in Him. Everything is made good in Christ. In contrast with an unfaithful and untrue Christian profession as the light-bearer in this dark world, He only is "the faithful and true witness." Then comes the statement that He is "the beginning of the creation of God." Adam was the beginning of the first creation of men on earth, but, alas, all failed in him, and the first man came to his end at the cross, and has been set aside. "The second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47), and when He came forth in resurrection He was "the beginning of the creation of God." As the risen Man He is the Head of the Church which is His body, and He is the Head of a new race. Therefore it is beautiful to see that when man had failed in everything committed to him in responsibility, all is made good in the second Man, as "the beginning of the creation of God."

We do not hesitate to call any teaching that uses this verse to indicate that the Lord Jesus was a created being, a "doctrine of demons." It is wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction. He, blessed be His name, is the Lord from heaven, the creator and sustainer of all things, but He became a man, and in His death all of the first creation, of which Adam was the head, came to an end. He came forth in resurrection as the firstborn from the dead (the place of pre-eminence), and is "the beginning of the creation of God."

We would add a word of caution here against having anything to do with the "damnable heresies" of the Jehovah's Witnesses, either in receiving their literature, or in listening to the propagators of blasphemies against the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God has addressed an epistle to a sister, in which He enjoins her not to allow such teachers to enter her house: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine," (the doctrine of the Father and the Son) "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 1:10, 11

A Blessed Place: Brought to God

"Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." Exod. 15:13. The children of Israel were brought to God as to the new standing they occupied. In the desert, just indeed entering upon it - this marked their character as pilgrims - they were yet brought into God's holy habitation. This corresponds with our position as believers in the Lord Jesus. He once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. This is our place as His redeemed. That is, we are brought to God according to all that He is; His whole moral nature, having been completely satisfied in the death of Christ, can now rest in us in perfect complacency. The hymn therefore only expresses scriptural thought, when it says -

"So near, so very near to God, I cannot nearer be,

For in the Person of His Son I am as near as He."

The place indeed is accorded to us in grace, but none the less in righteousness, so that not only are all the attributes of God's character concerned in bringing us there, but He Himself is also glorified by it. It is an immense thought and one which, when held in power, imparts both strength and energy to our souls - that we are even now brought to God. The whole distance - measured by the death of Christ on the cross when He was made sin for us - has been bridged over, and our position of nearness is marked by the place He now occupies as glorified at the right hand of God. In heaven itself we shall not be nearer, as to our position, because it is in Christ. It should not be forgotten that our enjoyment of the truth, indeed even our apprehension of it, will depend upon our practical condition. God looks for a state corresponding with our standing; that is, our responsibility is measured by our privilege. But until we know our place, there cannot be an answering condition. We must first learn that we are brought to God, if we would in any measure walk in accordance with the position. State and walk must ever flow from a known relationship. Unless therefore we are taught the truth of our standing before God, we shall never answer to it in our souls, or in our walk and conversation.

The Blessings of His Presence

"Be of good courage: it is I; be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the ship, and the wind ceased." Mark 6:50, 51.

"When they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was.... And as many as touched Him were made whole." Mark 6:54-56.

This is a little picture of what will be the consequence, of the Lord's return to the earth. When the Lord and His disciples rejoin the shore that He has left, when He comes back again, whatever there is of human woe, wretchedness, weakness, sickness, in this world, all will flee before the presence and touch of the Son of God. He will then and thus manifest His goodness.

Accordingly, what we have here is the consummation and triumph of all ministry in His own ministry. The disciples are shown in their weakness meanwhile, but encouraged by the prospect of His return in power and glory, when all shall be made good that the Lord has ever promised, and that He had led His people to expect in this world. It is a good thing for our souls to realize that while our Lord is away we are not to be discouraged by difficulties - not cast down if the wind is contrary and ourselves toiling in vain, yet not in vain. It is He who has sent us across that troubled sea; it is He who meanwhile intercedes for us, and as surely will He come to us. When He does return, all that is lacking He will supply, all that hinders will be removed, and then will the universe duly, fully exult in its Lord, our Lord and Master, when He shall be exalted from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. This may cheer us in any little service that is before us now. It is instruction for the service of the Lord, beginning with His own rejection in shame, and ending with His glorious return, when all sickness and misery will disappear before His presence.

Certainties

When the great scientist, Michael Faraday, lay dying, some journalists questioned him as to his speculations concerning the soul and death.

"Speculation?" exclaimed the dying man in astonishment. "I know nothing about speculations! I am resting on CERTAINTIES!"

Faraday then quoted from Paul's letter to Timothy: "I KNOW whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12.

A Change Is Coming to Christian Truth

In April, 1984, we ran a short article giving a brief history about Christian Truth up to that date. Since that time a need for a change has come.

For many years Ralph G. Rule bore the chief responsibility for Christian Truth. He had worked with Paul Wilson and his wife for several years. When Paul Wilson passed on to be with the Lord, Ralph Rule took up the work of selecting articles and Anna Wilson continued preparing them for printing.

In January of 1984 dear Ralph Rule also was called home by the Lord. At that time Anna Wilson had enough material from Ralph Rule to keep Christian Truth going for two years and now those two years are nearly completed.

Since there will be a change in the responsibility of supplying material for printing, we believe there should also be a change of name for the periodical. The new name selected is Christian Treasury. The reading of John 8:20 helped in this choice of the name. "These words spake Jesus in the TREASURY, as He taught." What an infinite Treasure there was in the treasury at that moment! Christ Himself, the Treasure and the teacher!

Our desire and prayer is that what is taught in this magazine ever be "the truth as it is in Jesus." Eph. 4:10. It seemed good to retain the word "Christian" in the title for two reasons: first, to preserve a link with the other titles which were Young Christian and Christian Truth, and second, the purpose of the magazine is to supply sound written ministry for Christians.

We thank those who have prayed with us, as we asked in the April 1984 issue, that sound clear written truth be preserved for God's people till the Lord comes. We need and desire your continued prayers for us.

Christ As High Priest Entering Heaven: As King of Kings

It is the believer's privilege to see and judge everything in view of Christ, for He has not only revealed what God is in His nature and character, but has fully brought out what man is. Moreover, He has made good at the cross, in and by His death, both the claim and the glory of God as to sin, having vindicated His majesty infinitely beyond the power of evil. If the cross encountered man's darkness in the deep and varied and complete guilt of a Christ-hating world, it has blessedly and forever answered it by the light of God's glory on the throne above. The first man, Adam, was turned out of the earthly paradise because of his sin, but Christ the second Man has entered heaven, having accomplished redemption.

Christ entering heaven testifies to the Jew and the Greek that He was rejected, being refused His every right and title here on earth. Those who should have hailed Him as their true King said, Away with Him, we will have no king but Caesar, and in place of His receiving His temple and throne, they nailed Him to the cross, thereby sealing judgment on Israel, on man generally, and on the world.

But what does heaven say of Christ who is now there? What does the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven say? Let us learn God's testimony to the wondrous sacrifice Christ has offered up, and the present blessed privilege to be known and enjoyed by believers in Him. They are immensely beyond what ancient shadows and types pledged, as the epistle to the Hebrews plainly teaches. There Christ is presented as the antitype to Aaron the high priest who, on the day of atonement, entered the "holy of holies" with the blood of the slain bullock and the goat, sprinkling it before and on the mercy seat. This secured redemption to Israel's priests and people, though it was only of value for twelve months, hence its repetition year by year. Even so, Aaron must retire from the presence of Jehovah, outside the veil, and never enter at other times, under the penalty of death. Such was Israel's representative, entering the earthly tabernacle by blood for the yearly redemption, as the divinely-appointed means of maintaining an earthly nation. Nothing on earth could compare with it. But how vast the difference for the believer today, founded on the infinite sacrifice of Christ the Son of God. He came at the consummation of the ages, at the close of man's trial, to settle the question of sin by becoming the sacrifice for it. On God's part He did this, as Hebrews 9 and 10 solemnly declare, when "through the eternal Spirit [He] offered Himself without spot to God." By His shed blood, atonement was made. By that same death, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, though the declaration of the truth (as in the varied aspects and application of His atoning death) was reserved for the timely moment to unfold that Christ by His own blood entered in "once for all" into the holy of holies, having obtained eternal redemption.

All other wonders sink into insignificance in the light of Christ's death, and its results. No more offering for sin; no more blood of atonement to be shed. The One who became the only sacrifice for sins on the cross is declared to have forever (in perpetuity) sat down on God's right hand. Thus the counsel of peace is between them both. God the Judge of sin, and Jesus the Sacrifice for it,

who met for judgment at Calvary, are now together in heaven for indissoluble peace, and this to all the redeemed, God's new creation. Not only the conscience, but the heart and ways of every believer are called in matchless grace to be in unison with it even now. By one offering He has perfected forever those sanctified, or set apart, to God in the value of His blood, which meets the majesty and the glory of God's throne. Not only has Christ by His blood provided eternal redemption for faith in present unbroken blessedness and a conscience purged from sin, but heaven itself is open for the believer to follow his precious Savior into the true sanctuary. There assuredly, as a purged worshiper, he in spirit finds his liberty and home before that same holy and blessed God he once dreaded.

Strange indeed that consecrated places of worship should be set up on earth to imitate the Jewish worship in the temple. Has not Christ entered heaven? While He is hidden there, has not the Holy Spirit come to witness to His finished work and present exaltation? Thereby believers may draw near to God in the holiest through the rent veil as worshipers in full liberty. Do we not possess Christ on high as our great High Priest over God's house, which we, believers, are (Heb. 3:6; 10:21)?

What now is the material temple? How contemptible its imitation, with its flowers, music, pictures, and all other human aids to worship. How sad to accommodate or reduce the work and Person of Christ to buildings, with a ritual that is earthly and sensational. Are we not now called to spiritual worship, in blessed association (for all true believers) with Himself on high? "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest [holy of holies]... by a new and living way," we are exhorted to draw near with a true heart.

The privilege was unknown and impossible in the typical days of Israel. Even Aaron himself did not have it. Yet an assumed earthly ritual after his pattern (which ignores all believers as priests having free access to God in the heavenly sanctuary) is adopted increasingly in Christendom, and sanctioned by those responsible to know better. If they would acknowledge that Christ has come, has been nailed to the cross and gone into heaven, and has endowed His own with heavenly privileges, then they might learn true Christian worship in the Holy Spirit's power. Then they would refuse all that which denies it, while awaiting the promised return of our hidden Lord and Savior.

If the truth of Christ the High Priest entering the holiest is thus significant, and exceedingly precious in opening up the heavenly privileges for the believer of today, Christ's coming out of heaven as King of kings is most solemn for the world. Ever since the ascension of Christ to heaven, many have adopted the profession of His name, but with the heart and mind quite unchanged toward God. This really adds to the condemnation of Christendom, for there remains the standing fact that God is at issue with the world about His beloved Son. The cross is its abiding witness, and furthermore, the personal presence of God the Holy Ghost gives demonstration in a threefold form of coming judgment, as stated in John 16. "Now is the judgment of this world," and in view of His leaving the world, He solemnly states: "The world seeth Me no more." The gospel did not alter this fact. On the contrary, the gospel supposes that man is lost and the world become a ruin. It does not propose to improve either, nor yet to rule the earth in power and righteousness, as the kingdom will before long. The gospel saves men by faith, and calls them to heavenly glory with Christ.

Christ As High Priest Entering Heaven: As King of Kings

Satan has been made known as the god of this age, blinding the mind of the unbeliever. Christ's resurrection too, which justifies all who believe in Him, becomes the distinct evidence of coming judgment. So the Apostle at Athens preaches in heart-searching language: "God... now commandeth all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Acts 17:30, 31. Thus Scripture is emphatic, proving how God holds the world guilty regarding His Son, in its hatred of Him who came in love and grace and in the glory of His own Person. His presentation according to promise and prophecy showed that He was the rightful God-appointed King. He was displayed as the divine Son and the King and as such He was rejected by the world's religious and civil representatives. They chose Barabbas and killed the Christ, God's Son, thereby closing the responsibility both of the nations and of boastful, religious Israel with its divinely given temple, earthly priesthood, and typical ritual.

It is blessed that all the sin of the world can never alter the purpose of God respecting His Son as His appointed heir to rule and reign for Him when He comes in universal dominion as Son of man and as King in Zion over all the earth. The Old Testament Scriptures abound with the glorious prospect. The very epistle to the Hebrews (which declares His present heavenly priesthood, and our worship in holy liberty before God without a veil or the smallest distance) speaks most clearly of the coming age of glory and blessing under the headship and rule of Jesus the Son of man. Chapter 2 speaks not of angels, but of Jesus as the Lord's appointed One to have all in subjection to Him.

But we are called to faith and patience in this day of grace when so many are deceived as to its nature and purpose, which is to take out of the world a people as God's sons for heavenly glory. If the believer knows what the future is to be for Christ, and sees things around to be exactly the opposite, faith, resting on God's intention regarding Him, looks meanwhile up into heaven, beholding Him crowned with glory and honor there. In these delusive times of outward greatness, of human boasting and pride, we may wonder when, how, and by whom are the rights, honor, and glory of God's King to be established? Surely God Himself will not fail to bring back His Son by ways and means and at a time least expected by the world, putting forth an irresistible power to subdue all enemies. The voice of Scripture speaks plainly of righteous judgment preceding and accompanying the appearing of the King of kings from heaven to establish His kingdom in power and glory.

In particular, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him," most emphatically makes known the coming glories of the once suffering and now exalted Lamb. His worthiness and redemption rights are declared in heaven, in view of being established, displayed, and universally owned. Yet seals are broken, trumpets blown, and vials poured out in their varied degrees of wrath, all before the shining forth of the hidden King of kings. Amid the closing sorrows that usher in His return, voices in heaven in Revelation 11 state the hour is come for the world kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. The redeemed elders celebrate it by falling on their faces and worshiping God for having taken to Himself His great power, and reigning. But earth is at issue as to this, for the nations are angry that God's wrath is come. This discloses the guilt, veiled though it be under religious profession. The nations of the earth will then prove to have nothing but hatred and opposition to God and His Anointed who, according to Psalm

2, will have the nations for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Then no longer hidden in heaven, like Joash in the temple of old, He comes forth from above, as we see in the emblem of glorious conquest seated on a white horse - the "Faithful and True" - who will judge and make war. Such is the description of Rev. 19:11-16, when the Lord Jesus will appear to this guilty and deceived world. Oh! the woe for those who now refuse Him as the Word of God in patient, matchless grace, only to be exposed to Him under the same title in unsparing judgment! For Christ is to smite the nations, and rule them with the rod of iron. The fierceness and wrath of Almighty God is His unmistakable testimony to Christ coming out of heaven to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Thank God, the believer's hope is heavenly, in character with his heavenly life and position, not of the world as Christ is not, but awaiting the fulfillment of His parting promise: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Oh! to view things in accordance with God's thoughts and purpose for Christ the only Savior, and ruler of the kings of the earth, who will, after cleansing by judgment, fill the whole scene with glory, blessing, grace and righteousness.

Christ Is Everything

God in His grace has centered for us every blessing in Christ. Without Christ we have nothing, nothing but our sins; with Christ we have all things, and therefore want nothing in addition to Christ. As the Apostle says, "All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. Hence the saying of an old writer, If thou knowest not Christ, it matters not if thou knowest everything besides; but if thou knowest Christ, it matters not if thou knowest nothing besides.

Now it is not every believer who knows Christ. All believers - those, that is, who have peace with God - know Christ as their Savior. They know Him in this character or relationship, but it is another thing to know Him in Himself, to have such a knowledge of Him as to be intimately acquainted with His mind, character, and ways. Those who thus know Him find their daily delight in feasting on His beauties and perfections. They value Him for what He is, if possible, more than for what He has done, albeit these two things can never be separated. The Apostle John indeed teaches that to know Him who is from the beginning is the last and highest attainment the believer makes. This knowledge is the characteristic of the fathers in the family of God (1 John 2).

Where then can I meet Christ and be in companionship with Him so as to learn always more of Him? The answer to this question is that the only place where we can come into contact with Christ is in the written Word of God. The Lord then said to the Pharisees, "Ye search the scriptures, for ye think that in them ye have life eternal, and they it is which bear witness concerning Me" (John 5:39 JND). We find Christ - Christ in every aspect, position, character, and office in the Scriptures, Christ in humiliation and rejection, and Christ in exaltation and glory. The more therefore I read and meditate on God's Word, the more I shall learn of Christ.

Let it be remembered, however, that Christ, though revealed in the Scriptures, cannot be apprehended by any efforts of the mind. We might read the Scriptures from morning to night without one single ray of the glory of Christ falling upon our souls. It is the Holy Spirit alone who takes of Christ and shows it unto us. Much therefore - may we not say, everything? - depends upon our state of soul. If I read carelessly or hurriedly, if I have unjudged sin within my heart, and consequently a grieved Spirit, how is it possible for me to discern Christ? Like Mary, I must be at the feet of Christ, occupied with Himself, the eye looking up to Him, and the ear opened to His voice, if the Holy Spirit is to reveal Him to my soul. Leisure of heart and quietness of mind are essential. But do you say, How is it possible to have that, absorbed as we are in our daily occupations? It is the Lord who gives His beloved sleep. Yes, He can give our souls quietness and rest in His own presence when surrounded even by the storm and the tempest. And then, through some scripture hidden away in our hearts, He can so irradiate it with His own glory as to make it the means of an enlarged revelation of Himself to our souls.

Do you desire to know more, to have more, of Christ? There are few who would hesitate to reply; Indeed we do. And yet it is quite true, as often said, that everyone possesses as much of Christ as he desires. Of the Israelites in the wilderness we read that they gathered of the manna every man according to his eating. The appetite determined the amount collected. So it really is with

ourselves. Christ never withholds Himself from those who truly seek Him; no, He responds to us far beyond our desires. The fact is, we want to have more of Christ, and something else besides. This cannot be. It must be Christ alone - Christ our only object - and then He will satisfy even beyond our utmost expectations.

Philippians 3 will teach us the true method of pursuing after the knowledge of Christ while waiting to possess, and to be fully conformed to, Him in the glory. Everything is counted but dross because of the excellency of Christ. For Him the Apostle willingly suffers the loss of all things, in order to have Christ alone as his gain. Then two things mark him - concentration and purpose of heart. One thing only is before his soul, and that he resolutely pursues. The glorified Christ, who had been revealed to him, acts upon his soul like a powerful magnet, draws him away from everything else to Himself, and begets in him the intense desire to know Him even more fully, to have fellowship in His sufferings, and even to be made conformable to His death, in view of the glorious prospect of being raised from among the dead, when he would be with, possess, and be like Him forever. May the Lord grant to each one of us to be like-minded in this respect to His servant Paul.

Christ Is Mine

If you do not keep your eyes very simply fixed on Christ in heaven, your ways will not be like the ways of those who have a heavenly portion. When that portion gets a place in the heart, it is very bright and attractive, not because of the glory, but because of Christ's being there. If you are occupied with this Christ, you will find your soul will make heaven your true home, heaven not far off, but near. Christ is there; your citizenship is there.

Can you look at Christ and say, All that this Christ is, and all that He has is mine, and not rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Oh, if you let your heart loose from things on earth, and get apart with Christ, you will find such a volume not only about Him but in Him! Is it joy to you when you think that Christ has apprehended you? That there is something personal toward you in His heart for which He has apprehended you? The early Christians had this joy unspeakable and full of glory. Do you have it? Do I have it? Does God see my heart going round and round Christ as the one Object of my life? - "To me to live is Christ."

The Christian Position: in the World, but Not of It

In the Old Testament, God spoke to a people who, instead of being outside the world, were expressly promised the most favored position and the most abundant blessing in the world. For their guidance, the fullest political and legal directions were provided. What treatment to give to captured cities, what exemptions to make from military service, what number of witnesses to require in criminal trials, what courts to establish for disputed questions, what punishment to inflict for particular offenses - these and other kindred matters are laid down with a precision suited to the worldly character of the subject with which they dealt. As might be expected, where the righteous regulation of society was the object, strict assertion of right is the pervading principle. "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth," fairly summarizes its spirit. Indeed, such must be the spirit of any code for the equitable government of man on the earth.

But is this the code laid down for the Christian to follow? No, the Christian is "not of the world," and the directions given him are suited to his heavenly character and his association with the "patience" of Christ. He is a follower of Him who was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter," "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." How, then, is the believer to act? In just the same way. "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." (1 Pet. 2:20-21.) Such too are our Lord's own directions. Instead of demanding an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, as the Israelite was to do, His instructions are: "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Matt. 5:39-41.

And this, though strangely put, is no figure of speech. Paul exclaims, as though the idea was shocking to entertain: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" It is incredible that "brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (1 Cor. 6:1-7.) Imagine such language addressed to a Jew! It is absolutely subversive of the whole principle on which the institutions of his state were founded - absolutely ruinous to any scheme of righteous government on earth. Why then is it urged, as an almost self-evident principle, on the believer? Because the believer is not of the world. He belongs to Christ. True, he will judge the world, and judge angels, but this will be with Christ, and if Christ waits for this time, so must he. He is not even to assert his rights now, but is called on to suffer wrong as Christ did - not to render "evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing" - not to avenge himself, "but rather give place unto wrath." (1 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 12:19.) Is it not a sad departure from the lofty position and heavenly association into which the believer is called, for him to step down to regulate the affairs of a world where Christ has no place, and where Satan reigns as prince and god?

On the night of their deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites were told to keep the Passover beneath the shelter of the blood-sprinkled lintel. "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand." Exod. 12:11. Could a people thus waiting for the call to depart give their time and attention to the affairs of Egypt? Had they not heard that judgment was coming? Did they not believe what the Lord had said? - "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord." v. 12. Is our position less solemn, less momentous? Are the commands to us less stringent? Is the judgment hanging over the world less real, less awful, or less certain? The commands are identical. To the faithful servants He says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord." Luke 12:35, 36.

No wonder that the Apostle should begin his practical exhortation to the Romans - "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2); the word, indeed, is age, but this age means the world during the present order of things, in contrast with "the age to come," the period of Christ's blessed reign. While, therefore, it is important to distinguish between "the end of this age," and "the end of the world" - two very different epochs - it is not necessary to distinguish between the world and "the age" when used to describe the state of things in which we now live. Thus employed, the word kosmos, generally found in John, is practically synonymous with the word aion, generally found in the writings of Paul. Why then is the Christian not to be conformed to the world? For two reasons: first, because it is an evil world from which Jesus died that He might set us free - "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:4); second, because, being associated with Jesus in death and resurrection, our relationships with this world are broken, and the ground of our glorying now is "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14. What was it that distinguished the past life of the Ephesian believers from their present life? "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. 2:2. Surely there is something most solemn and instructive in the way in which conformity to the world is here set side by side with conformity to the will of Satan.

Such then is the character of the world as gathered from the writings of Paul. But it is not by Paul alone that the world is held out as unsuited for the Christian. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses," asks James, addressing himself to those who were holding commerce with the world, "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. And yet, what are Christians doing on all hands but bidding for popularity, courting the applause of the multitude, seeking to be the friends of the world where their Master received nothing but a cross? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," writes the beloved disciple. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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 2:15, 16. Alas! what a commentary on this divine lesson to behold Christians rushing with all the eagerness of partisans into the strife of worldly factions, grasping at the riches and the pleasures, the powers and the applause, of a sin-stricken, Satan-governed, death doomed world, from whose defilement they are told to keep themselves unspotted, and from whose friendship they are bidden to hold themselves aloof! And why is this?

Simply because Christians have lost the sense of the heavenly nature of their calling.

In our Lord's prayer, He says: "And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John 17:13-18. Our relationship to the world then is the same as Christ's is now. We are as much separated from it in character as He is. We are, indeed, left in it, just as He was in it. But as He did not walk by human efforts, by any fleshly or worldly means, to make it better, so that is not our object. He came to testify of the Father, to manifest the Father, and as He witnessed for the One who sent Him, so we are to witness for the One who has sent us.

Christ's Patience

The present constant expectation of Christ stamps its own character on the Christian - "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding."

It is by this that the Christian in his mind and thoughts becomes associated with Christ Himself. You find this especially in the letter to the church at Philadelphia, for there, besides keeping His word and not denying His name, you read, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience." Whose patience? Christ's. Christ is waiting, and He is waiting a great deal more truly and earnestly than we are. We are waiting for Him, and He is waiting for us with all the love that the Bridegroom bears to the bride.

True, He is waiting until His enemies be made His footstool, but for His friends He has perfected His

work, and He sits expecting as to His enemies, and

then He will rise up to judgment. He does not know the time in that sense (of course, as God, He does), for it is not a revealed thing yet.

He is waiting, and we wait for Him; so complete is the association, now in spirit and then in glory, that save His personal glory, He cannot take any glory until He has us with Him, for we are joint heirs with Him. In the address to the church at Philadelphia we get, "I know thy works," but there is not a word said about them; the saints must be content to wait till the Lord comes.

"Because thou hast kept the word of My patience"; that was Christ's own path down here, and we are to walk in it now - now that we are at the end of a dispensation which, as an outward system, has wholly departed from God.

Christ's Tenderness

He made the worlds, yet lifted up infants in His arms and blessed them there. His voice and touch lay like balm on wounded hearts. Sin fled from the holiness of His presence, while the brokenhearted came to Him and found rest. Is He changed? No. We are ever proving the depth of His tenderness; that is fathomless. Blessed Savior, Thy tender word is like music to our souls! Thy voice heaven's lullaby to Thy tired and wearied host!

The Circle of the Church's Affection

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Rev. 22:17. We get the whole circle of the Church's affections. When the Spirit of God is working in the saints, what will be the first affection? Christ. The Spirit and the bride turn to Him and say, "Come." What is the next affection? It is the saints; therefore it turns and bids him that heareth say, "Come." If you have heard Christ, you come and join the cry. Even if you have not the consciousness of relationship, would you not be happier if you saw Him as He is? Therefore say, "Come." The first affection is toward Christ Himself, but the bride would have every saint to join in these affections and in the desire to have the Bridegroom. But does it stop with those who have heard the voice of the Lord Jesus? No; the first effect of the Spirit's turning our eyes to Christ is the desire that Christ should come; next, that the saint who hears His voice should have the same affection. And what next? We turn around to those who may be athirst, bidding them come; whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. The saint who has the sense of the blessedness of having drunk of the living water which Christ gives, wants others to have it also.

Cities

From the days of Cain who "went out from the presence of the Lord... and... bulided a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch," unto this day, men have built cities and adorned them. Cities have furnished the means for men's self-exaltation and pride. There their greatest works and achievements have been and are displayed. Commerce, industry, arts and sciences, wealth, massive structures, great thoroughfares, and bulging populations vie with each other for a place of fame in the cities of men.

Nebuchadnezzar expressed his pride and pleasure in his great city of Babylon when he said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" And many individuals and "Chambers of Commerce" have felt and expressed similar pride in their own cities since that day.

Beneath all the glory and glitter, however, the world's cities have a seamy side, for therein is to be found filth, corruption, poverty, sorrow, and death, and generally the larger and greater the city, the greater is the wretched contrast. Even the names of the cities often belie the sadness that can be found there. Two examples of this can be seen in the Scriptures - Zarephath and Nain. The name of the former means refinement* and expresses what men generally like to think of their cities, but the one little incident recorded in 1 Kings 17 lets us see the other side of life in the city of refinement. At the gate of the city Elijah met a poor widow - one who had known sorrow and bereavement - looking forward to nothing but death by starvation. Where was the refinement of a city that could let such dire poverty pass unaided? The latter city, Nain, gives a stark picture of life in the city called "beautiful" or "pleasing," for the Lord Jesus met at the gate of the city a funeral procession, and again the woman mentioned was a widow. What was all the beauty of the city of Nain to one who had lost her husband through death, and now was about to bury her only son?

Surely the Scriptures and common knowledge of existing conditions remind us of the vain show in the cities of the nations. The dread realities of the slums, the hospitals, the jails, the mental and corrective institutions of all kinds, the lives of sin and debauchery, stand in sharp contrast with gilded exteriors and boastful advertising.

Another strange phenomenon in the conduct of men with regard to cities is that from time immemorial the cities have been the special targets of attack and destruction. Some men build them, and others destroy them. The greater the city the more often it has been destroyed ruthlessly. Very few indeed have been the cities of the old world that have not been destroyed by men. Walls great and high were built to protect the cities, but conquerors invented machines of war to batter down the walls, or to catapult destructive missiles over the walls. With the invention of gunpowder, walls lost their effectiveness, and with the modern inventions which can rain down destruction from the skies, no city on earth is safe.

How good it is to note that men of faith rose above the cities of men, and looked forward to that which is more sure and certain. Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder

and maker is God." Heb. 11:10. There were some notable cities in his day, but he lived the life of a stranger and a pilgrim, and by faith looked forward to the "city of God." Oh may we who live in the days of great cities and great achievements have a right perspective and look beyond the present evil world.

In a day that is soon coming, cities are going to be destroyed on an unprecedented scale. Nothing the world has ever known, even during the last world war with its blockbuster bombs by thousands upon thousands, will compare with it. In Isaiah 14 we read of a man who is coming who is described= as Lucifer, or son of the morning, or morning star, who will destroy cities. This is not Satan, as is often supposed, but is the last head of the Gentile dominion - the beast who will head up the revived Roman Empire. He will be Satan's counterfeit "morning star" who will claim to usher in a new day. The Lord Jesus is the true Bright and Morning Star, and He will be the great precursor of that day that is coming when He shall have subdued all His enemies, and reign in righteousness. This false "son of the morning" will wreak havoc and destruction instead of bringing in blessing and peace.

There are several bits of evidence in the Scriptures as to who this person is. Isaiah describes him as the "king of Babylon," but that title is expressive of the last holder of Gentile supremacy over the Jews; this began with Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. The destruction of this Lucifer also precedes the mention of the destruction of the Assyrian power in Palestine (v. 25), which if it referred to the past destruction of these two powers, the order would have had to be reversed, but they are placed according to the events at the end of this age.

In this chapter we find a soliloquy where hell speaks of Lucifer: "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof?" vv. 15-17. This man who will set himself in opposition to the God of heaven, and receive direct Satanic support, will unleash a torrent of destruction on the cities of men. Perhaps this may be by means of atomic and hydrogen bombs which are being stock-piled or prepared against that day. If so, it will be the grand end result of all man's scientific and

industrial progress turned loose to destroy his greatest works. What a climax! What a sad tale of the result of departure from God! Yes, the earth left a wilderness, the cities destroyed.

These coming events may take place at the beginning of those seven dreadful years after the Church is taken to glory with Christ, and the beast goes forth conquering all before him; or it may more likely be when his kingdom takes on a Satanic character in the middle of the seven years. At any event, we as Christians need not look for these things, or concern ourselves with them, except to realize that we live at the very end, and so have our loins girded (separated from the principles of the world), and our lights burning (our testimony shining brightly for our rejected Lord) as we wait and watch for Him.

Another portion of Scripture which details destruction of cities is found in Revelation 16; verse 19 says, "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." This is a description of the destruction of the cities of the nations, not by the beast,

and not by men, but by God Himself. This is at the very end of the tribulation when the Lord is about to assert God's rights to the earth, and at that time God blows on all the works of men - the cities of the nations (that wherein they boasted) fall in the judgment of God. Fellow-Christian, do we view with wonder and admiration the vaunted greatness of the cities of the nations, or do we consider them with a measure of sadness when we think of the doom that awaits them?

The "great city" mentioned in verse 19 may refer to Jerusalem, and "great Babylon" is a reference to the city of Rome. Both cities come prominently before us in the final judgments upon this world - both will receive special dealings of vengeance. It was Jerusalem where our Lord was crucified, and it was under the imperial power of Rome that it took place. The civil power of Rome will come in remembrance before God, for He has not forgotten what it did to His Son, nor what it did to the many thousands of Christians whom it martyred.

"Babylon the Great" of Revelation 17 and 18 is another power based at Rome, and will be the religious and not the secular center. Its doom comes earlier, and from the hand of the beast and his confederate kings, while the Roman government will come in for direct visitation from God.

Then after God has blown on the greatest endeavors of men in the destruction of their cities, His beloved Son, His anointed King, shall demonstrate what a city should be. So we read in Psalm 46, where God's presence in Jerusalem is described: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." vv. 4,5. Jerusalem, the city of peace, shall be His earthly center, and the heavenly Jerusalem above shall be the display of the Church in glory (Rev. 21:9-27). That city will be all perfect within and without, for it will have "the glory of God." It will have "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Another great contrast with the cities of men is found in the words, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

"Lord, we can see, by faith in Thee,
A prospect bright, unfailing;
Where God shall shine, in light divine,
In glory never fading.

"A home above, of peace and love,
Close to Thy holy Person;
Thy -saints shall there see glory fair,
And shine as Thy reflection.

"Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray -
That prospect bright, unfailing,
Where God shall shine in light divine,

In glory never fading."

A Common Bond

How is it that I love strangers from another land-persons of different habits, whom I have never known-more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us. What happiness! What a bond!

The Dead Alive, and the Lost Found

Luke 15

This chapter, from the 4th verse, gives us our Lord's reply to the charge brought against Him by the Pharisees and scribes - "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" - which becomes the occasion of His setting forth the depths of divine grace.

In this threefold parable, observe that it is only on one sheep, one piece of silver, one son, that there is such joy in heaven. If a whole city were moved to repentance, we can well understand how such an extensive work might be connected with rejoicing, but here it is one sinful, lost sinner over whom there is such gladness. This is a marvelous thought. Each too was lost - a lost sheep, a lost piece of silver, a lost son. So Scripture testifies that God now looks upon man as lost. Hence we read that "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Men and women, however refined or educated, never of themselves find their way back to God. No, they are lost! Therefore in the riches of divine mercy Jesus came to seek and to save the LOST!

In this parable, we see the outgoing of the loving heart of the Good Shepherd, the gracious actings of the Holy Spirit, and the marvelous love of the Father toward the lost. In the simplest, and yet the most telling way, the blessed Lord thus proclaims the love of God - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost - to sinners.

He first tells out the shepherd's love in seeking and saving one lost sheep. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"

Notice Christ's joy in saving, and that He keeps those whom He finds. "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." How safe then is the sinner who takes refuge in Christ, and gives Him all the glory of saving him! None can pluck out of His hand. "He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." It does not say that the angels rejoice, though they may, but what we have here is the deep joy of Christ in finding a lost sheep. When He saved the wicked Samaritan woman, He could say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." How precious this is! And further it says, "When he cometh home." Christ will never let go of the sinner who touches the hem of His garment, until he is landed securely in the glory; He will carry him safe home. And then what endless joy! All the intelligences of heaven will rejoice with Him when we reach home.

The second part of the parable is about a lost piece of silver. We have here a woman taking a lighted candle and sweeping the house diligently. Her heart is set on finding the lost piece. She may see a thousand other objects, but the moment the light shines upon the lost piece, it is found, and then, oh, what joy! The woman illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of a soul.

The third part of this parable opens out to us the heart of God the Father towards a poor, lost, guilty sinner. It blessedly illustrates the exceeding riches of divine grace. The self-willed man, following the desires of the flesh and of the mind, wandered far away; he was glad of the gifts, but

cared nothing for the giver. To gratify his own lusts was the absorbing object. He went farther and farther from the father. This is where man's will and desires always lead him. He went "into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." It is a true picture of man - every man. He gladly receives God's gifts, but how does he use them? Is it not to please himself? It may be the pleasures of the world, the religiousness or irreligiousness of the world, but the gratifying himself is the object, and not God. Nothing can be worse. It is man doing his own will, not God's. It is man pleasing himself, and not caring to please God.

The prodigal went on step by step until he "spent all," and "began to be in want." His resources were limited, and came to an end. All his means of self-pleasing were exhausted. What could he do then? What does man always do when in distress, but turn to his fellow man? He first of all made man his refuge, not his father. Man will do anything rather than turn to God. And what did he find? He found that citizens of this world have self for their object. To feed swine was the only use men could make of him for their own profit. And there this once wealthy, jovial, pleasure-seeking wanderer found himself in poverty, in hunger and filth. He found all resources gone, and an aching void occupying his soul. He looked at men around, and no heart throbbed with pity and compassion - "no man gave unto him." The "husks" of the world were all the resources at his command, and poverty and want were devouring him. At last he discovers that he is perishing. What a striking picture of man who is without God, and who has no hope. In helplessness and despondency he is forced to the conclusion - "I perish with hunger."

What a solemn conclusion, "I perish." And, you, if you were to die tonight or the Lord Jesus should come, would you be banished forever from God's happy presence? A thousand ages might roll on, and still there would be the blackness of darkness forever. Do you say, I am not a great sinner? I reply, What can be worse, what sinner can be blacker, than living all your days seeking happiness apart from God and Christ - using the very blessings with which God in His providence has blessed you, to lead your heart and energies farther and farther from Him? What can be worse than this?

The prodigal's thought was to escape from perishing. "I perish with hunger." His need led him to think of the father. We are told that he "came to himself," and what then? He thought of the father's house, and that the servants there were far better off than he. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare." His mind, resting on the father's home, and love, and resources, not only showed him more and more his own poverty and wretchedness, but so attracted his heart that he exclaimed, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

The whole question now was, how the father would meet this sinful one in his ruin and degradation. Does he receive such? Ah, that is the question. And are we not taught that the need and misery of this ungodly one served to draw forth the rich mercy which was in the father's heart? And so God loves sinners, though He hates sin. He delights in mercy; His heart pours forth its richest, warmest love to the utterly unclean and helpless. We are told that when he did actually arise to come to his father, while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and (without one upbraiding word) fell on his neck, and kissed him. Can anything exceed the depth and perfection of such love? God so loves. It needs an unworthy object on which

to manifest itself. It indeed passes knowledge. We think of it, taste and enjoy it, and adore and worship, but we lack capacity to measure its divine and infinite depths.

The father saw him in his filth, had compassion on him in his ruined state, and kissed him in his rags; then when under the sense of his guilty, perishing condition, the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," it only brought out yet more of the deep resources of grace that were in the father's heart. It strikingly tells us that it is worthy of God to love, to save and bless lost and ruined sinners. "The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." The father did not point to his rags and say, I must have them mended; no, God can use nothing of the flesh with its affections and lusts. God's way is not to mend the flesh, but to give a new nature and bring the sinner into a new standing and position before Him. He could not use any part of the old, filthy, worn-out, tattered garments, but he adorned him with the best robe. The richest blessings that God has to give are lovingly bestowed upon repentant sinners. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. "Put a ring on his hand" in token of the everlasting love and relationship subsisting between the father and the repentant one on whose face he had printed the kiss of reconciliation. Put also "shoes on his feet," and thus fit him for the path of service which he may have to tread; then, that he may feel happy and at home in his father's presence, it is further said, "Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry." Let us eat - the father and the son - for "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." "Let us eat, and be merry." What a wondrous place of blessing! Can anything exceed it? The lost one is brought back into the Father's presence, fitted for it by the Father Himself, and then called to share the Father's thoughts and joy in the infinite worth and finished work of the slain Lamb.

"He saw us ruined in the fall,
And loved us notwithstanding all;
He saved us from our lost estate;
His loving-kindness, O how great!"

Thus, through divine mercy, the believer in Jesus is redeemed to God, made nigh, and has liberty now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. He has peace with God, rest in God, joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit makes this known to our hearts. What a wondrous salvation - "made...meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." What rest and joy this gives us!

How it puts us at once on the ground of thanksgiving and worship, especially when we enter into the

Father's delight to have us near Himself, and in the enjoyment of His own love. "Let us eat, and be merry:

for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." It is added, "And they began to

be merry." Yes it was only the beginning of the joy, for ages upon ages may roll on, and this wondrous joy will never grow less. In God's presence there is fullness of joy, and at His right hand

there are
pleasures for evermore.

Dependence

The only true attitude for the Christian is that of dependence. The moment we get off the ground of dependence on God we are sure to come to grief. This is true both individually and collectively.

Peter got off the ground of dependence when, in self-confidence, he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Matt. 26:33. Alas, he soon had to learn by bitter experience that he had no strength to stand when the hour of trial came. So it is with us; if we think we are strong and able to meet the enemy, it is just then we are in the most dangerous position of all. God has to allow some sifting to come to show us that we are nothing and that all our strength is in Him.

For a servant of God, even success in the Lord's work has its dangers. He is apt to accredit himself with what God has done through or by him, and to think that he has accomplished something. In this connection it is interesting to note that the apostles, after returning from a most blessed missionary work, reported not what they had done, but all that God had done with them (see Acts 14:27; 15:4, 12; 21:19).

But it is only in the Lord's presence and in nearness to Him that there can be that absence of self and constant dependence upon Him so needed for the Christian life and walk and service.

The same fact of the need of dependence is true collectively. The moment an assembly of Christians begins to say (or to think, if they do not say it), "We are the people, the testimony," failure has come in; they are off the ground of dependence. Self, and not Christ, has become the object of attention. They have, in fact, taken the first step on the sloping plane of self-occupation, which is sure to end in disaster if not repented of.

Our blessed Lord was the true example of dependence. He never deviated from the path of absolute dependence on the Father, not even for a moment. The last Adam stood where the first Adam had failed. No subtle allurements of Satan could induce Him to set up an independent will, or leave the ground of simple dependence.

Thus, He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38); "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30); "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29), etc. And He could answer Satan by "It is written." He lived by the Father, and by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. His was a path of perfect obedience, perfect dependence, perfect submission to the Father's will, and therefore of perfect light and inward joy, whatever sorrows may have pressed upon Him from without.

O to learn more of His grace! Just to dwell upon the path of the lowly, humble Man, Jesus, who could say in the depth of His self-abnegation: "Thou [My soul] hast said to Jehovah, Thou art the Lord: My goodness [extendeth] not to Thee; - to the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent [Thou hast said], In them is all My delight." Psalm 16:2, 3 JND Trans. What a place of

perfect submission and dependence!

And was not our Lord Jesus truly and really "over all, God blessed forever"? Rom. 9:5. Surely He was, but He does not take that place in the Psalm just quoted. Nowhere indeed, does He show Himself to be God more truly than in the act of taking, voluntarily and in divine love, the lowly form of a bondservant.

And how blessedly He has marked out the way for us, and manifested the true features of the divine life in man, in His lowly path of dependence on God.

Blessed Savior, may we learn of Thee and be occupied with Thee! And thus may that wretched self which so clings to us be displaced and forgotten in presence of Thy lowly grace, perfect devotedness, and humble submission to the Father's will in everything!

Four Consequences of Divine Love

Read 1 John 4:7-19

There are many exceedingly beautiful points in this passage, but I will only touch on four of them. There is little of ourselves here; all is about God - what He is and what He does.

By nature, neither you nor I have any confidence in God. It was want of confidence in God that led Eve to parley with Satan. The moment there is any parley with the devil, he gets bolder. All the family of Eve have got their father's and mother's likeness stamped in their hearts - lack of confidence in God. And that is where the gospel comes in. What does it open up to us? I know a poet has written of "Paradise Regained," but it is false. The gospel opens up to us God's paradise, not man's. He displays what He is in Himself, in the life and ways of His Son. What begets confidence in our hearts is this - the discovery of what is in God's heart.

In this epistle God does not say He loves us; He proves it. You might slight the love of God, you may scorn it, you may trample it under foot, but you cannot deny it; God is love!

Where does love come from? from the heart of man? No, from the heart of God. Is there any true, genuine love in your heart to any of God's people? It comes from God. If there be love in your heart to any of God's people, it will come out. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Chap. 3:14. Not because we say we are converted, but because we love. We cannot know God, and be born of Him, without these blessed characteristics coming out in us. Can you say you love? Then I will tell you something better - you are a child of the Father. Is there anything better in this world than to know God? He is revealed in the Person and life of His Son. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." John 17:3. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." You cannot get in contact with Him without loving Him. It is the first mark of a converted soul.

Look how the Apostle, in this passage, unfolds four things. In the 9th verse there is the love of God manifested in sending His Son that we might live through Him. You cannot say God does not love you; you dare not say it. You ask, Why? I answer, Because you are part of the world.

1. LIFE

In the 9th verse there is something God wants you to get which you do not have - life; in the 10th verse He wants you to get rid of something which you do have - sins. If I had written this, I am sure I would have put the 10th verse before the 9th; that is, I would have put

the question of my sins first. But no, there is a deeper

thing, the fact that I have not life - eternal life. "In Him was life." No one else had life; life was only found in Jesus.

What is the state that Scripture describes as true of us? Death! We were "dead in trespasses and sins." I grant you, you have natural life, but you cannot be sure of it for twenty-four hours. You

have an eternal existence. You will last as long as God lasts, but that is not eternal life. Eternal life is being with Christ - knowing Him - not merely eternal existence.

Eternal life is association with Christ. What does the gospel present? We were all dead men, and God sends His Son to give us life. He might have left us alone.

What an awful thing - to be left alone! But, blessed be His name, He brought in a remedy. "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." What we do not have, He sends His Son to communicate; we get all through Christ; we are shut up to Christ.

But you ask, What about the law? Could the law give life? No; Christ gives life; having gone into death, He has brought life and incorruptibility to light. The life of Jesus will not do. We hear a great deal about His life, and very beautiful it is to trace His life and ways on earth, but He had to die for "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Hence we get:

2. PROPITIATION

Not only does God propose to give me that which will fit me for His presence, but He says, Sinner, you have something about you that will keep you out of My presence. So He sends His Son to be the propitiation for my sins. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." When did He give Him? When we were sinners. The positive side of the gospel is what God gives; the moment you believe, you have it; the negative side is that my sins are all taken away. He sent His Son, a propitiation for our sins. Do you believe that? The 9th verse gives us His life; the 10th verse gives us His death. On the cross Jesus makes propitiation for sin. He was made sin who knew no sin. He was there, pouring out His soul unto death, meeting all God's claims against sin. Look at it; the Son of the very God against whom you have sinned has made propitiation for the very sins that would have brought you into eternal damnation. Now He is exalted and gone on high; the veil is rent; He is gone back as man; the work is all done for which He came to die. Atonement has been effected by Christ, accepted by God; the fruit - peace - is to be enjoyed by the believing sinner.

What about your sins? you may ask. They were borne by Christ. There is the proof of the love of God to me - of the love of Christ - "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Sin was condemned, and sins were blotted out when Christ made propitiation for sin. "Herein is love." Do you want a greater or better proof of love? The heart that believes can say, I now have what I did not have, and I have lost what I had; I have obtained life, and lost my sins.

3. POWER

There is another thing God does (v. 13). He gives us of His Spirit, and that is power. The moment you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you cease to be a lost sinner; your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Look at Eph. 1:13: "In whom... after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of

promise." Note Acts 10:44 also: "While Peter yet

spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." On whom? On believers. It is the sinner who hears and who believes. He says, I need this salvation. His heart

gets plowed up. I would like it, he says; I believe it; and God seals that one with the Holy Ghost. If I bought a flock of sheep at the market, should I drive them home at once? No; I should put a mark on them - my mark - before driving them home. Do you know how God knows His sheep? They all have the Holy Ghost, and the price He paid for them was the precious blood of Christ. The devil's children have their mark; they are spotted with sin. God's children have a lovely mark.

4. BOLDNESS

All this is the fruit of love - God's perfect love. It is love "toward us" (v. 9), love "in us" (v. 2), love "to us" (v. 16), and love "with us" (v. 17). This gives us our fourth point, boldness. We get another "herein" in the 17th verse - "Herein is love with us (as the margin rightly puts it) made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment."

Thus there are four things we get: life, peace, power (by the Holy Spirit), and boldness in the day of judgment. There is no fear in love. God's perfect love casts out all fear, because fear has torment. To paraphrase a common saying, when love comes in at the door, fear goes out at the window.

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

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

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

The Divine Man

We are led to look at our Lord Jesus, and through a succession of conditions we see in Him man presented to God with infinite, though varied, delight and satisfaction. I have long since traced Him in the following way as man in all perfection:

Born. The material, so to speak, moral and physical, is presented in Jesus as the born one. He was a taintless sheaf of the human harvest. In Him, man was perfect as man (Luke 1:35).

Circumcised. Jesus in this respect was under the law and He kept it, of course, to all perfection. Man in Him was thus perfect as under law (Luke 2:21).

Baptized. In this character, Jesus is seen bowing to the authority of God, owning Him in His dispensations, and man in Him is perfect in all righteousness, as well as under law (Luke 3:21).

Anointed. As anointed, Jesus was sent forth to service and testimony. In this respect, man is seen in Him perfect as a servant (Luke 3:22).

Devoted. Jesus surrendered Himself to God, and left Himself in His hand to do to His utmost will and pleasure. In Him man was, therefore, perfect as a sacrifice (Luke 22:19, 20).

Risen. This begins a series of new conditions in which man is found. This is the first stage of the new estate. John 12:24 intimates a new course in man, as here said. The corn of wheat, having fallen into the ground and died, is now capacitated to be fruitful. Man in the risen Jesus is in life which cannot be annulled.

Glorified. The risen Man, or man in life which cannot be annulled, wears a heavenly image. The new man has a new, or glorious, body.

Reigning. The risen and glorified Man receives in due season authority to execute judgment. Dominion is His. The lost dominion of man is regained, only in a better and fuller way.

Scripture leads us through this series of contemplations on the Son of man. And though I speak here of the Man, as elsewhere I did of the divine glory, yet I do not divide the Person. Throughout all, it is "God manifest in the flesh" we have before us.

We need to walk softly over such ground, and not to multiply words. On so high a theme, precious to the loving, worshiping heart, we may remember what is written, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." Pro. 10:19.

A Duty or a Crime

Humility is proved by obedience, and obedience depends on subjection to the Word of God. The same act in different circumstances is a duty or a crime; the only unerring test for the believer is God's Word. It was a sin for the Jews not to destroy all the Canaanites; God commanded them to do so - the only One competent to judge and entitled to command of His sovereign will.

For a Christian now to do the same thing would be to mistake His mind. The world is bound to deal with murderers as stringently now as ever; God has not revoked in any wise the word He uttered as to the sanctity of human life. That is what God had set up long before the law of Moses, or any distinction between Jews and Gentiles. It is annulled neither by the law given to Israel nor by the gospel that now flows out in grace to the world.

Government among men stands upon its own foundation and was involved in the commission given to Noah, but the Christian is outside and above it all. He is called unto a new calling, and this we have here: "Now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. 2:13. Our task is not the preservation of the world's order or the punishment of its disorder; but a new building grows up on the blessed, holy, divine ground of the blood of Christ by which we are brought nigh to God. Nor is it only what we shall be later, but what we are now. We "are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

The End of the Lord

When difficulties and trials arise, the tendency of our hearts is constantly to be more occupied with deliverance from the difficulty than with the end and purpose of the Lord in allowing it. Unless the soul is exercised before Him, a solution is often sought and accepted which is neither His help nor His salvation.

Hence it is good for us, whether individually or collectively, to ponder well the Lord's way with us which surely leads to the Lord's end. Of Israel it was said that they were "a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways." Thus the state of heart before God becomes important, so that the soul may be disciplined and His end may be reached by it. Nothing occurs without His hand being in it. Stormy wind and rain only fulfill His word: "He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." Job 37:13. It is thus we learn most precious lessons - precious because we get beyond the trial to the loving-kindness of the Lord, and our feet can then stand in an even place. We are in the sanctuary of God, and everything falls into its proper place when we are there.

Never was there a moment when the saint who desires the Lord's glory more needed to be there, in the quietness of spirit which results from the sense of everything being under God's eye. Could anything be more trying to the Psalmist (Psa. 73) than to see evil apparently prospering while those whose desires were right and were seeking to walk in integrity had waters of a full cup wrung out to them? In the sanctuary he learned that, while his heart had been grieved, he had been, and was, the object of God's care and solicitude - that he would be held by His hand and guided by His counsel. Surely we may say, "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." Isa. 30:18.

Now there is something equally trying which tests the state of our hearts before Him. It has pleased God in His grace to awaken, in the midst of the surrounding form of godliness, some of His saints to the desire of holding fast the word of the Lord, and of not denying His name. But even here, while desires may be sincere, how often the heart is lacking in subjection; consequently the end of those desires is sought in our own way. The claim to be fearing Him who is the Holy and the True is put forth by saints who take different paths. When this is the case, each claim must not always result from a sincere desire to be true to Him. But while this is admitted, we find that the soul is not chastened, and thus the moral state necessary for the desire to be accomplished in us is not reached.

The exhortation of the Apostle to the Philippians, that they would fill up his joy by being of one accord, of one mind, evidently sprang from his observation that the tendency in each was to seek to serve according to the mind of each. Euodias and Syntyche liked to have their own way in laboring in the gospel. The mind which was in Christ Jesus, humbling Himself as a man, and becoming obedient even unto death, alone would enable them to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together [as co-athletes] for the faith of the gospel." Encouragement is not found in belaboring our own point but it is found in Christ. There is comfort of love there. It is fellowship of the Spirit, and not unity of opinion; kindness and compassion take the place of an independent

path in this world of sorrow. When the soul is disciplined, and self-will rebuked in us, then the mind of Christ becomes dominant. He could say, "My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." John 5:30.

When evil prevails among the saints of God, it is a great thing to remember that the Lord is good and doeth good (Psalm 119:68). This should lead our hearts to Himself, and then we shall not fret ourselves because of evil doers, nor be overcome of evil, but we shall learn to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. He is longsuffering and, moreover, His end has to be reached, and not ours. Besides, in reaching His own end, He knows how to order everything so as to produce, in the one that waits for Him, exercise of heart and utterances of voice which otherwise would not have been called forth. Affections and desires are thus wrought in us which are according to Himself; we learn to silence self, and even words and thoughts are ordered before Him. This is brought before us in Psalm 5: "Give ear to my words, O Lord." It is not a general petition, but words become weighed before Him. Thoughts too. The musings of the soul are in His presence - "Consider my meditation." There is no room for self-will to seek to gain its end from the Lord when the utterance is, as in Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight."

Further, the Psalmist continues (5:2), "Hearken [or attend] unto the voice of my cry... for unto Thee will I pray." Notice that these early psalms, as do others, contemplate the godly in the midst of the pressure of evil around, and turning to the Lord on account of it, and this not as a last resource, but as the first thought - "In the morning shalt Thou hear my voice; in the morning will I address myself to Thee, and will look up." Psalm 5:3 J.N.D. Trans. The thought here is not so much the fact of directing the prayer to the Lord, but the ordered watchful state of soul which claims His ear and attention. Evil may be all around, and there is the consciousness that He has no pleasure in wickedness (v. 5), but the soul is not occupied with evil but with the Lord, and thus holy fear is produced - "I will bow down toward the temple of Thy holiness in Thy fear." Psalm 5:7 J.N.D. Trans. This does not produce indifference to evil, but rather the suited conduct with regard to it. "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness because of mine enemies [Margin, those which observe me]; make Thy way straight before my face." Psalm 5:8. "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies [those which observe me]." Psalm 27:11.

It is good thus to have self-will broken up, and the soul ordered before God and man. A lowly walk results, and the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, while adoring worship flows forth.

"I bow me to Thy will, O God, And all Thy ways adore."

This tunes the heart and brings the spirit into harmony with the wisdom as well as love of God. The doxologies of the saints vary in their character according to the subject which fills the soul. In Ephesians 3, the infinity into which the saints are introduced, and the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, lead the Apostle into the expression of what the Church is as the vessel formed by the power which worketh in us for glory to God by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. In Rom. 11:33, after the Spirit has reviewed the whole scope of the relations between men (Jew or Gentile) and God, and the aboundings of sin are shown to have brought forth the superaboundings of grace, the Apostle's utterance of glory takes another character, and celebrates "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His

ways past finding out!"

Sin broke up the rest of God in the first creation, but opened up the way for Him to form a new scene of blessing where that rest shall never be disturbed. And if He, in patient grace and long-suffering with evil, has, without wearying, moved on toward that rest in His own path of wisdom and knowledge, and that rest remains for us, shall we not welcome any exercise which throws the soul into harmony with that path, and teaches us His way? All was ruin with Israel when Moses prayed, "Show me now Thy way." Exod. 33:13. He had acted for God in the camp - the result of holy jealousy in the sense that Jehovah's presence was incompatible with that of a golden calf. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" We do not know how far his actions, although prompted by holy jealousy, were the taking of his own way to vindicate the name of Jehovah, but the pressure on his spirit of the state of the people, and the taste in his own soul of being known of God and of being the object of His favor, led him to say, "Show me now Thy way." Had Jehovah a path in the midst of Israel's ruin? Surely He had. As Moses pleads, he gets the consciousness that there is a glory all the Lord's own and yet connected with His dealings with a sinful people, which he earnestly desires to see. To see it was impossible. None but One - a lowly Man of sorrows indeed, but in whom dwelt the fullness of the Godhead - knew that glory and could meet it.

As we gaze on the cross, we learn adoringly that Godhead glory was in the One who suffered there. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." John 13:31. He was indeed Son of man, but for God to be glorified in Him there must have been the infinite and eternal springs of Godhead fullness. "My servant Moses," honored as he was, must be hid in the cleft of the rock as Jehovah's glory passed by. Covered with His hand, he may see the back parts, that is, the Lord must first pass by. To meet Him face to face would be to take the place of an equal. When He passed by, the blessedness of His path was seen. His glory, in which He abides, alone is supreme. We now see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1:18. And yet the glory of His Person remains unknown. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." Matt. 11:27. What grace was accorded to Moses as, put into the cleft of the rock by the Lord Himself, he saw the back parts and heard the name of Jehovah proclaimed - a name which told what He was with respect to the evil which had come in. "He made known His ways unto Moses," and Moses worships and intercedes for the people. He is with God about the people, and learns the value of His name in a fuller way than had been taught him at the bush (Exod. 3:14, 15). That name he publishes in the prophetic song which records the lowest depths into which the people would fall (Deut. 32). But besides this, his own condition is transformed and he acquires the impress of the communion he had enjoyed. "He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights." In his actings he had been with the people, and he had acted with holy jealousy surely, but with regard to their evil. Now he is with the Lord, and all is in harmony with that place. When he comes down he reflects, unconsciously to himself, the light which shone upon him there.

Two things are thus brought before us. First, without being indifferent to evil, we learn to walk with the Lord in the midst of it, and to know His way. The end of the Lord is then quietly waited for.

"His every act pure blessing is, His path unsullied light."

Second, the soul is chastened and learns to behave itself as a weaned child. There is no seeking to carry out our own will, however sincerely we may believe ourselves to be right. The eyes are not lofty, nor the heart haughty, but communion with His mind who could say at a time when evil was specially felt, "I thank Thee, Father, " will cause us to bear the impress of having been with Him, by our taking His yoke and being meek and lowly in heart. The end of the Lord will be more precious to us than the end which the fretfulness of our own spirits would desire.

May the Lord rekindle in each beloved saint fresh desires to lodge in the goodness of the Lord, and to have His secret with us.

The Enjoyment of Heavenly Things: in the Wilderness

Redemption, complete salvation, purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, introduces the Christian into a pilgrimage in the wilderness. With God, he only passes through this world, a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; still, this pilgrimage is but the life down here, although it is the life of the redeemed. (The epistle to the Romans answers to this.)

But there is the heavenly life, the warfare in the heavenly places, which goes on at the same time with the wilderness journey. When I say at the same time, I do not mean at the same instant, but during the same period of our natural life on the earth. It is one thing to pass through this world faithfully, or unfaithfully, in our daily circumstances, under the influence of a better hope; it is another thing to be waging a spiritual warfare for the enjoyment of the promises and of heavenly privileges, and to conquer the power of Satan on God's behalf, as men already dead and risen, and as being absolutely not of the world. Both these things are true of the Christian life.

Now, it is as dead and risen again in Christ that we are in spiritual conflict; to make war in Canaan we must have crossed the Jordan. Ephesians answers to this, only Ephesians has nothing to do with our death to sin. It is, as to this question, simply God's act, taking us when dead in sin and placing us in Christ on high. Colossians is partially both. It is life here in resurrection, but it does not set us in heavenly places -only our affections there. By heavenly life I mean living in spirit in heavenly places. Actually, Christ was divinely there - we are united to Him by the Holy Spirit.... In both Philipians and Colossians the heavenly life is spoken of as a present thing, but there is entire separation, even down here, between the pilgrimage and this heavenly life itself, although the latter has a powerful influence on the character of our pilgrim life.

Faith and Infidelity

Christian faith, or the faith by which a man becomes a Christian, is the subjection of the soul to the testimony of God. It is believing what God has spoken to us in His Word. It is based on confidence in God Himself, and what has been revealed is believed on God's authority. If a person does not believe what God has spoken, he does not believe God, and is practically an infidel. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Believing on God's authority, and on it alone, is believing God-nothing else is. True faith is faith in what God has said, because God has said it. If you require man's sanction of it, you have not faith in God. You do not bow to His Word, and that is infidelity.

For the Master's Use

Remember, it is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone. It is manlike to drift with the crowd; it is Godlike to "stem the tide." It is natural to compromise, to follow the social and religious fashions of the day for the sake of gain and pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both gain and pleasure on the altar of truth. Paul said, describing his first appearance before Nero, "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me." 2 Tim. 4:16. "Truth has been out of fashion ever since Adam and Eve changed their robes of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves." Noah built and voyaged alone, Abraham wandered and worshiped alone, Daniel dined and prayed alone, Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone, Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone, and Jesus loved and died alone.

Think it not strange if you are called upon to stand alone for the truth sometimes, to remain alone "in the wilderness," unseen and unused while others climb to great heights of fame. Think it not hard if "all men forsake" you and people think you are "queer." You are in the process of seasoning now, hard lumps of self-will are softening, selfish plans are melting by the weathering of His grace, and sometime the clay will be ready for the Potter's wheel.

Do not be turned aside from God's plan for you by the counsel of misguided, well-meaning friends. There are multitudes today, both in the church and in the world, who applaud the courage and the fortitude of the prophets, apostles and martyrs of the early church, but condemn as "stubbornness" and "foolishness" similar faithfulness on the part of Christians today. Rest assured, if God has called you, He will also prepare you and provide the means and the grace for you to perform and to finish the work to which He has called you, in His own good time. Then with great joy you will be a vessel molded unto His glory.

Four Points of Knowledge

Read Deut. 8:1-9

"My God, the spring of all my joys,

The life of my delights;

The glory of my brightest days,

The comfort of my nights."

In these verses we have four valuable points of knowledge connected with our walk through the wilderness: (1) the knowledge of ourselves; (2) the knowledge of God; (3) the knowledge of our relationship; (4) the knowledge of our hope.

First, as to the knowledge of self, we read: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." Here is a wondrous point of knowledge. Who can utter it? Who can penetrate the depths of a human heart? Who can tell its windings and labyrinths? The details of a wilderness life tend to bring out a great deal of the evil that is in us. At our first starting upon our Christian career, we are apt to be so occupied with the present joy of deliverance that we know only a very little of the real character of nature. It is as we get on from stage to stage of our desert course that we become acquainted with self.

But then we are not to suppose that as we grow in self-knowledge our joy must decline. Quite the opposite. This would be to make our joy depend upon ignorance of self, whereas it really depends upon the knowledge of God. As a point of fact, as a believer advances in the knowledge of himself, his joy becomes deeper and more solid, inasmuch as he is led more thoroughly out of and away from himself to find his sole object in Christ. He learns that nature's total ruin is not merely a true doctrine of the Christian faith, but a deep reality in his own experience. He also learns that divine grace is a reality - a deep, personal reality - that salvation is a reality - that sin is a reality, the cross a reality, the advocacy of Christ a reality. In a word, he learns the depth, the fullness, the power, the application of God's gracious resources. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger," not that you might be driven to despair, but that He might feed "thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years."

Touching and beautiful appeal! "Forty years" of uninterrupted evidence of what was in the heart of God toward His redeemed people. "Six hundred thousand footmen" clothed, fed, kept and cared for, during "forty years" in a vast "howling wilderness"! What a noble and soul-satisfying display of the fullness of divine resources! How is it possible that, with the history of Israel's desert wanderings lying open before us, we could ever harbor a single doubt or fear? Oh! that our hearts may be more completely emptied of self, for this is true humility and more completely filled with

Christ, for this is true happiness and true holiness. "For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand:

He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." Deut. 2:7.

All that we have been dwelling upon flows out of another thing; that is, the relationship in which we stand. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." This accounts for all. The hunger and the food, the thirst and the water, the trackless desert and the guiding pillar, the toil and the refreshment, the sickness and the healing, all tell of the same thing - a Father's hand, a Father's heart. It is well to remember this, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds (Heb. 12:3). An earthly father will have to take down the rod of discipline, as well as imprint the kiss of affection; he will administer the rebuke as well as express his approval and chasten as well as minister supplies. Thus it is with our heavenly Father. All His dealings flow out of that marvelous relationship in which He stands toward us. He is a "Holy Father." All is summed up in this. Our Father is the "Holy One," and the "Holy One" is our Father. To walk with, lean on, and imitate Him "as dear children," must secure everything in the way of genuine happiness, real strength, and true holiness. When we walk with Him, we are happy; when we lean on Him, we are strong; when we imitate Him, we are practically holy and gracious.

Finally, in the midst of all the exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and even the mercies and privileges of the wilderness, we must keep the eye steadily fixed on that which lies before us. The joys of the kingdom are to fill our hearts, and to give vigor and buoyancy to our steps as we pass across the desert. The green fields and vine-clad hills of the heavenly Canaan, the pearly gates and golden street of the new Jerusalem are to fill the vision of our souls. We are called to cherish the hope of glory - a hope which will never make ashamed. When the sand of the desert tries us, let the thought of Canaan cheer us. Let us dwell upon the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." 1 Pet. 1:4. "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." Bright and blessed prospect. May we dwell upon it, and upon Him who will be the eternal source of all its brightness and blessedness!

"To Canaan's sacred bound

We haste with songs of joy,

Where peace and liberty are found,

And sweets that never cloy.

Hallelujah!

We are on our way to God!

"How sweet the prospect is!

It cheers the pilgrim's breast;
We're journeying through the wilderness,
But soon we'll gain our rest. Hallelujah!
We are on our way to God."

Gideon's Sevenfold Qualification for Service

Judges 6

The book of Judges has a special claim upon our attention, for it is the record of Israel's failure in the land. God had brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm and had brought them through the Red Sea, while He smote Pharaoh and his host and caused them to sink "as lead in the mighty waters." And He led them onward still, through the waste howling wilderness, accomplishing the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and set them in possession, under the leadership of Joshua, of the promised inheritance. They were now across the Jordan, the river of death and judgment; God had rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off them at Gilgal (Josh. 5:9), and as long as they walked in obedience and dependence, no foe could stand before their face. But man invariably fails when entrusted with blessing under responsibility, even under the most favorable circumstances, and Israel was no exception to the rule, and was, in fact, a most striking example of it.

No sooner was Israel's blessing at the flood-tide mark than it began to ebb. It is true that they are said to have "served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" (Judg. 2:7), but it is immediately added that "there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim," etc. vv. 10,11. The consequence was that "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel," but "nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those

that spoiled them." vv. 14-16. Here indeed we have the two aspects of the whole book - Israel's failure, and the Lord's faithfulness. And out of God's faithfulness sprang His intervening grace, giving His people a little restoration and reviving in the midst of their departure, corruption, and bondage. The correspondence between this state of things and the present state of the Church will be apparent to all. I propose to call attention to one of the most noticeable instances of God's intervention - I mean His raising up of Gideon to be a judge and deliverer to His people. The object before my mind in taking up this instance is that we may learn, as the Lord may enable us, what are the qualifications which God seeks (and surely also they are of His own providing) in those whom He can use for service and testimony among His people.

The sixth chapter begins: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." (Read vv. 1-6.) Midian was near of kin to Israel, having descended from Abraham through Keturah, his second wife, and again and again they are brought into contact with the chosen people. In the wilderness "the Lord spake unto Moses" (and Moses had married Zipporah, daughter of the priest of Midian), "saying, Vex the Midianites, and smite them: for they vex you with their wives." (Numb. 25:16-18; 31:1-12.) But now they are in the land itself, though they had never followed the ark across the Jordan, "and Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites." How solemn the warning! But "Israel cried unto the Lord. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the

Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet." vv. 6-8. First, the Lord sent a prophet to bring their sin home to their conscience; then He sent an angel to raise up a deliverer, and He finds Gideon threshing wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites (v. 11).

1) We may name this first qualification - Feeding on Christ in secret. Wheat is surely a figure of Christ (see John 12:24; 6:35). It was a time of great difficulty; idols had usurped the place of Jehovah, so that those who remained faithful in the midst of the general ruin could only worship the Lord alone and in private. So it was with Gideon; Baal had an altar in his father's house, but this "mighty man of valor" threshed wheat alone that he might find sustenance, notwithstanding the watchful eye of the Midianites. Alone in his family, and alone in threshing wheat, he gathered strength from communion with the Lord.

Feeding on Christ in secret is the fountainhead of all qualification for the Lord's service. Thus it was that Joseph was sent into exile and prison; Moses was sent for forty years into the desert; Paul was sent into Arabia, etc. It is when we are alone with Christ that we learn both what we ourselves are (that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing), and, blessed be His name, what He Himself is, in the infinite fullness of His grace and sufficiency; the Lord can never use us as standard-bearers until both of these lessons have been learned. We need, however, to learn more than this; not only do we apprehend (after we have come to the end of ourselves) the all-sufficiency of Christ for every need, but we learn also something of His unspeakable preciousness and beauty, so that we can go out afterward in His service with satisfied hearts, as well as with confidence in His infinite resources. To feed on Christ in secret is indeed the present and abiding need of our souls.

2) The next qualification is evidently an exercised heart. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." vv. 12,13. These words show that Gideon identified himself with the condition of his people, for he says, "Why... is all this befallen us?" etc., and entering into their state, he bore it on his heart before the Lord. Without this, he would not have been qualified to be their helper. It was so with Nehemiah (see Neh. 1), with Daniel (see especially chapter 9), and pre-eminently it was the case with our blessed Lord. Take an instance or two. They brought unto Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and we are told that before he healed him, "looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." Mark 7:32-35. Again too, before He raised Lazarus from the dead, we have the marvelous record that He wept, and that "groaning in Himself" He came to the grave - signs surely of His entering into and taking (if we may so speak) upon His Spirit the condition of those whom He had come to help - that in sympathy and grace He so identified Himself with them that He became the voice of their sorrow and grief, for "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. 8:17. The cross is of course the highest expression of His entering into our state, for on it He "bare our sins in His own body." 1 Pet. 2:24. The principle remains, for our power to succor others will be (remembering our entire dependence on the Lord) just in proportion as we have been able to enter into their sorrows or difficulties and to make them our own. It might be well to remember this in our desire to bring saints into their true place. The Lord will use us if we are qualified for it, but to be qualified for it, we must feel deeply the character

of the evil in which they are entangled, and have mourned over it before the Lord. Hence, in the case before us, no sooner does Gideon unburden his exercised heart than "The Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" v. 14.

3) We now get another very important qualification - a sense of his own nothingness. He replies, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Mannaseh, and I am the least in my father's house." v. 15. His exercises had thus not been without blessing, for he was now in the place where God's power could come upon and use him. It was so with the Apostle Paul after the exercises of heart produced by the thorn in the flesh; he was then brought face to face with his own utter impotence and want of natural adaptation for the Lord's service, and then the Lord could say to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. 12:9. All the Lord's servants must learn this lesson sooner or later - that there is nothing in themselves, in their position, or in their circumstances, which can be used for God, that, in a word, the whole of their resources and strength lies outside of themselves, in Himself - that their sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5). It is then no longer a question of what the Midianites are, but what God is, for we go to meet them in His strength. Accordingly, the Lord now said to Gideon, "surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." v. 16.

4) Thereupon, Gideon becomes bolder, and asks a sign that the Lord talked with him - prepares a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour, and bringing them, places his offering, at the direction of the angel, upon the rock. "Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight." v. 21. By this Gideon is made to know that he had seen an angel of the Lord face to face, and he is filled with fear. But "The Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." Thus he obtains from the Lord a further qualification for service, namely, a soul at liberty - in peace before God. God had revealed Himself to His servant, and the effect was terror, but the terror passed away before the peace-speaking word of Jehovah. We need not enlarge upon this feature, as it is the history of every soul that is brought into the presence of God (see Isa. 6; Job 42; Luke 5; etc.). Everyone will understand that there cannot be any true or effectual service for the Lord while the soul is occupied with its own condition, until it is set free, and is at home in God's presence. Thus, when the Lord Jesus came into the midst of His disciples, after the resurrection, He said, "Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." John 20:19-21. Here we have a direct connection between peace and service.

The immediate consequence in Gideon's case was - and this gives us a further qualification - that he became a worshiper. "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom." v. 24. That is, he worships God in the character in which He had revealed Himself - as Jehovah who had spoken peace to his soul. The sequence is very instructive. First peace, then worship, and the lesson is, that only those who have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ can worship. What a commentary upon the public worship of our land! But now we direct attention to this - that the true servant must first be a worshiper, for indeed to go out in service before we are worshipers, is to go out in ignorance of the character of Him whom we

profess to serve, and to misrepresent our Lord, exposing ourselves to certain defeat. Let us then be careful to maintain the divine order.

Now the Lord calls upon Gideon to act, but he must first begin at home. "And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down. Then Gideon took ten men," etc. vv. 25-27. Here we get obedience. Gideon was associated with evil in his father's house, and as another has said, "Faithfulness within precedes outward strength; this is God's order." We have an illustration of this in the gospels. After the Lord Jesus had cast out the demon from the lad, the "disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." Mark 9:28, 29. So it was with Gideon; until he had dethroned the idol in his father's house, he could not be sent to smite the Midianites. There is ample ground in this direction, beloved friends, for heart searchings with us all. How often, when we have mourned over lack of power in the Lord's service, might we have traced the cause to some lack of obedience, of self-judgment, of separation, of faithfulness in our private lives! We were weak because we had not first dealt with some idol of our hearts or households. Satan is helpless in the presence of an obedient man; he cannot touch such a one, for he is armed with a coat of mail which not one of Satan's fiery darts can ever penetrate. It is thus that the Lord Jesus vanquished him in the desert. The reply, "It is written," foiled him in every attack. And here too was Gideon's strength, for no sooner had he received the command than he "took ten men... and did as the Lord had said unto him" (v. 27); in obedience he overcame, and purged his father's house - and the subsequent anger of Baal's followers only exposed their own weakness and the impotence of their god. The devil resisted in obedience is the devil vanquished.

7) Gideon is now a vessel sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and we get accordingly the crowning qualification of power. It is very instructive to note the course of the record. The vessel is now prepared for service, and immediately we are told: "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Mannaseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali, and they came up to meet them." vv. 33-35. Satan can never forestall God. While Gideon is being prepared, the Midianites, etc., are still; when Gideon is ready, God gathers them together for destruction. They marshal their forces to destroy Israel, but the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Gideon, and now it is God Himself against the Midianites. Ah, beloved friends, let us see to it that we never move forward against the foe except in the power of the Spirit of God.

Note another instruction. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet. This Gideon, who was threshing wheat to hide it from the Midianites, now puts a trumpet to his lips, and sounds forth defiance in the face of the foe. In like manner, the Peter who trembled before a maidservant, being clothed with power by the Spirit, charges home upon the rulers the sin of crucifying Christ. The apostles also, being filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke the Word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

But we cannot pursue the subject, as we have now traced the qualifications of this "mighty man of valor" for testimony and service. He is now equipped, ready for the conflict. There will be weaknesses and failures, doubtless, but still he is one whom the Lord can now employ. May God grant that the sevenfold qualifications of Gideon may be found in all who are engaged in His service and testimony in these closing days.

Giving Thanks in or for All Things

Eph. 5:20 Thessalonians 5:18

These two scriptures, often classed together, are yet very different in their significance. The latter is plainly an exhortation: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." It is not, as the reader will observe, for everything, but in everything, give thanks. And there are few Christians who would not acknowledge, we will not say their obligation, but rather, their privilege to render thanksgiving to God in all their circumstances and trials. They may be passing through deep sorrows or severe sufferings, and yet, viewing these in the presence of God, they will find abundant cause for praise. Not only so, but, as the Apostle here says, It "is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This puts the matter on another ground, revealing what is acceptable to God, and, if it may be so expressed, how gratifying to Him are the thanksgivings of His people.

Turning to the former scripture, it will be as plainly seen that it is not an exhortation. Note the context. We are bidden not to be "drunk with wine, wherein is excess," but to "be filled with the Spirit"; then three things are indicated as the consequence. First, we shall have hearts overflowing with praise, "speaking," as it is said, "to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"; then we shall be "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and last, we shall be "submitting" _ourselves "one to another in the fear of God."

We are not then expected - and this is the point to be noticed - to give thanks always for all things as a matter of subjection to the will of God, as in the case of giving thanks in everything, but the former of these two things will only flow out as fruit of being filled with the Spirit. If therefore we desire

and what believer would not desire to be in such a state? - to be giving thanks always for all things, we must first seek to be filled with the Spirit. Now it is precisely here that the difficulty meets us, for is it not true that few of us are willing to be so filled? For indeed it involves much, even the constant refusing of self, and the daily bearing of the cross

incessant watchfulness that we be not drunk with wine (that is, seeking to be exhilarated with any of the joys of earth) and ever bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. (2 Cor. 4:10). He gives more grace, sufficient grace even for being filled with the Spirit; surely none of us should have any lower object than this which the Word sets before us. What a change would then be wrought in our daily lives! What power too would characterize our walk and service! Even, therefore, if we, can already give thanks in everything, we should also seek grace to be in that state in which "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" would be its expression in the power of the Holy Ghost.

God Receives Sinners Through Jesus Christ

It is deeply interesting and instructive to note the different ways by which souls in whom God's Spirit is working are led into peace and blessing. After being first awakened and groping about in the darkness, or at least the twilight of human thoughts and ways, they all sooner or later reach the one and only door into blessing, drawn by God's Spirit to Him who says, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." John 10:9.

Luther, after being awakened to a sense of sin by a terrific thunderstorm, and after long groping about in the darkness of the Roman system under whose instruction he was painfully and wearily creeping up Pilate's stairs in Rome to obtain absolution, heard

suddenly a voice like thunder in his soul, that said, "The just shall live by faith." His painful journey was ended, and unexpectedly he found himself at the door of faith which God has opened to all poor sinners who know and feel their need.

Another servant of God who was early brought to feel his need of something more for his soul than the world could supply, had a feeling akin to despair when it occurred to him that perhaps if he could only have the precepts of the Savior continually before his eye, it would be a help to his obedience and means of salvation. With this intention, he got two New Testaments and cut out from them all the commands and counsels he found, and pasting them on a board, placed it where he would see it frequently. But he found, alas! that to be reminded of precepts was not to keep them; to know the will of God was not to do it, and to be acquainted with the right way was not to walk in it. Indeed, he had set himself a far harder and more hopeless task than even poor Luther, long before him, had done when he set himself to work at ascending Pilate's stairs in the hope of finding peace and salvation at the top.

Things seemed to grow darker, and all efforts only seemed to make matters more hopeless. One day a friend said to him, "If you want to find the knowledge of God, study the epistle to the Romans; it is there that the plan of salvation is made known." Acting at once on this suggestion, he thought he would copy out the whole epistle, that he might better master the subject and become more fully acquainted with the Apostle's reasoning. He commenced the task of copying the epistle into a book and got as far as the 8th chapter. Coming to the 8th verse he wrote, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

These words arrested him, and he said to himself, "What is the use then of all my efforts? If a sinner cannot please God, how can I do anything to gain acceptance with Him?" Then suddenly, as with a sunbeam, the thought flashed across his mind, "No, I cannot please God, but Christ has. He is the way, He is the perfect One, and this is what is meant by these words at the end of every prayer, 'Through Jesus Christ our Lord.' " "Yes," said he to himself, "God receives sinners for His sake, and He will receive me."

Like Luther's "The just shall live by faith," which came as a divine revelation to his soul, delivering him from the burden of his sins, so there came to this man, as a divine revelation, the blessed

truth, "Through Jesus Christ God receives sinners." On this his soul rested in undisturbed peace, and this he proclaimed to others until the Lord took him to Himself.

God's Delight

There is no light like the cross to show out the real character of human nature, no act man ever did of which God could say, That is what man is, till His Son was put to death, and the light of heaven shone down upon a city of murderers. That cross just showed what we are in nature, and He came there because He is rich in mercy. Who can say anything if God chooses to take up such and give them a new nature, a new life?

Adam's life in Eden was not a life beyond the grave -not that life in which the second Man, the Lord from heaven, ascended up where He was before. As Son of man, Christ could and did die, but He gave up His life and took His life again; that is the life which a man taken out of nature receives. The first Adam could not have had such a life unless imparted by the last Adam; He communicates life - eternal life. There was no living fountain of water flowing down until Christ left the grave and ascended. Nineteen hundred years ago a fountain was opened in heaven.

Gone - Forever

The Bible speaks of our sins as forgiven, forgotten, cleansed, gone, atoned for, covered, ransomed, paid, removed as far as the east is from the west, cast behind God's back, remembered against us no more forever, cast into the depths of the sea, imputed to the account of Christ. Do not permit Satan to bring them to your remembrance when the Savior God Himself will remember them no more.

Grace Upon Grace

The Son of God Came Down From Heaven in Grace He Is Gone up in Righteousness He Is Coming in Glory He is gone up in righteousness He is coming in Glory He is gone up in righteousness He is coming in Glory He is gone up in righteousness He is coming in Glory |He is gone up in righteousness|He is coming in Glory |

The Father Sent the Son|The Son gave Himself|It was by the eternal Spirit that He Offered Himself|

Now God is for us|Christ is in us.|And the Spirit's Seal is on us.|

We are children of God|Members of the body of Christ|And temples of the Holy Spirit|

We have righteousness|And we wait for its hope|

We have the earnest|And wait for the redemption of our bodies|

We have redemption as to our souls|And wait for the redemption of our bodies.|

We have the salvation of our souls|And look to the savior to change our bodies of humiliation|

We have received the Holy Ghost|And wait for the bridegroom|

The High Road

"If any man serve Me," says the Lord, "let him follow Me." Notice, He does not say, "let him do this or that for Me," but, "let him follow Me." To wait quietly on the Lord that we may know His will, and to follow Him faithfully, hearkening to the voice of His word, is the most pleasing service we can render to the Lord. He may lead some into more public, others into more private paths of service, but to follow closely the directions of His Word, while looking, by faith, to Himself, is our most acceptable service. And for all such as follow Him, He has left His richest promise: "And where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." John 12:26.

The Index

When we do not know ourselves, it is far easier to teach others than to govern self. Now the tongue is the most direct index of what is in the heart. We all fail in many things, and if we assume to teach others, our offenses are the more serious, and all the more deserve condemnation. Humility in the heart makes a man slow to speak; he waits rather to be taught, and for others to express their thoughts; he is more ready to learn than to teach....

Many according to the flesh would avoid giving a blow, who cannot restrain a passionate or hard word against a neighbor. But if no man can restrain the tongue, the grace of Christ can do it, for the inner man on one side is under the yoke of the Lord, and is meek and lowly in heart; Christ fills the heart, and thus precisely because the tongue follows the impulses of the heart, the speech will express this meekness and lowliness. For this, it is needful that Christ alone should dwell there, and the flesh be so, held in check, that when temptation comes it may not stir. It is difficult not to fail, but it is very useful to see that the tongue shows what is working within, just as the hands of a clock show the hidden workings of its wheels.

Is the Testimony Our Object?

The question is to my mind a profound mistake, that the testimony they bear is the governing object of the mind of saints. It is no new thought to me, but what I have insisted on, I know not how long - some 30 or 40 years - that wherever an assembly, or those in an assembly, are set to bear a testimony, they will be a testimony to their own weakness and inefficiency, because the object of their walk cannot be one which efficiently forms a Christian. When they have a right one, they will be a testimony, but to be one is never the first object.

To have Christ, I mean practically to walk with Him and after Him, to have communion with the Father and the Son, to walk in unfeigned obedience and lowliness, to live in realized dependence on Christ and have His secret with us, and realize the Father's love, to have our affections set on things above, to walk in patience and yet confidence through this world - this is what we have to seek; and if we realize it we shall be a testimony, whether individually or collectively, but in possessing the things themselves, and they form us through grace, and so we are one [i.e. a testimony]: but seeking or setting up to be one does not. Moses did not seek to have his face shine nor even know when it did, but when he had been before God it did so.

Wherever Christians, as far as I have seen, set up to be a testimony they get full of themselves, and lose the sense that they are so [i.e. full of themselves], and fancy that it is having much of Christ. A shining face never sees itself. The true heart is occupied with Christ, and in a certain sense and measure self is gone. The right thought is not to think of being a testimony save of your being so, and that is thinking of self, and as I have said before, it is what I have always seen to be the case.

Jesus in the Days of His Flesh

There was no "loitering" in the path of the Blessed One through the world, no seeking, as we may seek, for ease. Life with Him was taken up with the untiring activities of love. He lived not for Himself. God and man had all His thoughts and His service. Did He seek for solitude? It was to be alone with His Father. Did He seek for society? It was to be about His Father's business. By night or day He was always the same-on the mount of Olives praying, in the temple teaching, in the midst of sorrows comforting, where sickness was, healing. Every act declared Him to be the One who lived for others. He had a joy in God which man cannot understand, a care for man that only God could show. Never do we find Him acting for Himself. If hungry in the wilderness, He worked no miracle to supply His own need; if others were hungering around Him, the compassion of His heart flowed forth, and He fed them by the thousands.

Jesus Thy Name Is As Ointment Poured Forth

Sol. 1:3

The preciousness of Christ (as the Bridegroom) to the bride is portrayed in this language. This will be at once perceived if the context be examined. "Let Him kiss me," cries the bride, "with the kisses of His mouth: for [now addressing Him directly] Thy love is better than wine." S. of Sol. 1:2. It is not so much the love itself, as the enjoyment of the love, of which she speaks; it is this which is "better than wine." Every renewed heart will respond to this statement, for while the love of Christ is ever beyond all our thoughts, infinite and unspeakable, it is only as we enjoy it that we in any measure enter into or appreciate it. But when the heart expands in the power of the Spirit to its blessed influences and constraint, when it opens without hindrance to the inflowing of its mighty tides, then the soul learns experimentally the marvelous character of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Another thing is equally true. The more we taste of the love of Christ, the more we desire it. Every experience of it begets an ardent longing for a larger measure of it. Thus, if the bride had not previously known something of the Bridegroom's affection, she would never have uttered this passionate desire.

It is, moreover, through the heart that all divine knowledge is received. Hence, as here, the bride passes from the expression of her estimate of the enjoyment of the Bridegroom's love to the declaration of the effect of His excellencies and perfections. Her heart apprehends, through the enjoyment of His love, the savor of His "good ointments." Still, it may be remarked, in the language of another, that "however strong" the bride's "affections may be, they are not developed according to the position in which Christian affections, properly so-called, are formed. They differ in this respect. They do not possess the profound repose and sweetness of an affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated, the bonds of which are formed and recognized, and which counts upon the full and constant acknowledgment of the relationship that each party enjoys, as a certain thing, in the heart of the other. The desire of one who loves and is seeking the affections of the beloved object, is not the sweet, entire, and established affection of the wife, with whom marriage has formed an indissoluble union. To the former, the relationship is only in desire, the consequence of the state of heart; to the latter, the state of heart is the consequence of the relationship."

This distinction should be well weighed and apprehended, for it contains the key to the interpretation of the "Song of songs." But it is still true, whether in the heart of the bride or in that of the Christian, that love is the means of and the capacity for, divine knowledge; that, in a word, he who loves most knows most. (See 1 Cor. 8:1-3; Eph. 1:18, reading "heart" instead of "understanding.") Mary Magdalene is a striking illustration of this point. Peter and John had more light than she, for they (or certainly John) had seen that the sepulcher was empty, and had believed, while she was in utter darkness as to the resurrection. And yet it was to Mary that the Lord revealed Himself. The two disciples, having satisfied themselves that the sepulcher was bereft of its prey (and John, at least, believing that the Lord had risen victor over death), "went

away again unto their own home." But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping. Engrossed, in the intensity of her affection, with her Object, she was rooted to the spot; having lost Christ, she had lost everything, and all the world was but a sepulcher to her if Christ were not living. The state of her heart was right, although her spiritual understanding was not enlightened, and hence it was that the Lord could come and disclose Himself to her, and make her the glad messenger of the blessed tidings that henceforward He associated His brethren with Himself in heaven, before His Father and God, in His own place and relationship.

If the reader has understood the divine principles which have been enunciated, he will easily comprehend the language of the bride, which must now be considered. "Because of the savor of Thy good ointments," she says, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth." The "good ointments" will represent for us the blessed fragrance of His excellent perfections, as seen in His life, in His acts of tenderness and grace, as well as in His words, and in His walk of entire dependence and obedience before God in His pathway through this world. They will, doubtless, be apprehended and enjoyed in the intimacy of His own presence, in His manifested relationships with the soul, in His ways and personal dealings. The bride, indeed, could not have known the savor of His good ointments in any other way. And it is always true that the nearer we are to Christ the more fully we enter upon the experience of the beloved disciple who was admitted to the intimacy of reposing upon the Lord's breast, and the clearer will be our perception of His beauty and grace. We may be much impressed by report and testimony, even when at a distance like the Queen of Sheba, but it is only when, like her, we hear and see for ourselves, that we are lost in adoration in the presence of the fragrance of the good ointments. If, therefore, we would be absorbed with the sense of His graces and beauties we must press on with the two disciples, drawn onward by His attractions, to the place where He dwells. Having part with Him there, the savor of His excellencies will constitute the perpetual joy and rejoicing of the soul.

Before proceeding further it should be noticed that the sweet savor of the life of Christ, as may be gathered from Lev. 2, was first and foremost for God. The priests might eat of the fine flour mingled with oil, of which the meat offering was composed, but all the frankincense thereof was to be burned with a part of the offering upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. How blessed to know this! If there had not been a single soul upon the face of the earth to delight in the savor of the good ointments of Christ, His life would not have been in vain, inasmuch as it brought glory to God and filled His heart with infinite joy. No our blessed Lord could not have wasted His sweetness "upon the desert air," because there was One whose eyes ever rested upon Him with unspeakable complacency, noting with joy the perfection of His every thought, and act, and word, and step. It was this which drew forth from the overflowing heart of God the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And the more Christ was tested - and He was tested in every variety of way, even by the holy fire of the altar itself - the more abundantly did His sweet savor flow forth to gratify the heart of His God. We call attention to it, because if the bride is, if we ourselves are, permitted to participate in the enjoyment of the sweet savor of His life, to feed upon the perfections of His entire devotedness to the glory of His God, it is only because God has first had His portion, and because He, in His ineffable grace, has called us to share in His own delight in the pathway and Person of His beloved Son.

Notice also that it is through the savor of the good ointments that His name, the revelation of all that He is, is spread abroad as the fragrance of ointment poured forth. In this way, as expressed in

the hymn-

"Like fragrance on the breezes, His name is spread abroad."

Illustrations of this abound in the gospels. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria." And we read in another place, "And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tiro and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid."

This is doubtless only one side of this precious truth, for what our scripture brings before us is rather the soul's entrancement with the preciousness of Christ through the apprehension of His various excellencies as displayed in Himself and His ways. Still it is always through our needs that we first get to Christ and learn what He is in His love and grace. Then, when our needs have been met and satisfied, we are at leisure, set at liberty from ourselves, and at liberty in His presence, to contemplate Himself. The savor of His good ointments, indeed, scarcely steals into the soul with its gladdening refreshment until every question affecting ourselves and our relationship with God has been settled. In rare cases Christ Himself may be known at the commencement of the spiritual life, but, generally speaking, a troubled conscience has to be appeased through the efficacy of the blood of Christ before we are free to survey His glorious perfections. Then, as these surprise and awaken the soul's delight, His name, even the very mention of it, will fill our hearts with the sense of its sweetness and fragrance, and produce such emotions as can only be expressed in adoring worship at His feet.

Another thing should be mentioned. The savor of the sweet ointments of Christ may flow out through the holy lives of His people. Every trait, every perfection exhibited by Himself in His walk through this world may be reproduced in those who are His. Look, for example, at the precepts and exhortations of the epistles. Every one of them has been perfectly exemplified in Christ, and unless this is remembered, so that they may be associated with Himself as the living Word, they will become hard and legal obligations. Christ in us, Christ our life, as set forth in Colossians, is to be followed by the display of Christ through us, in the power of the Holy Ghost. For this we need to be much in His company, for the more we are with Him and occupied with Him, the more we shall be transformed into His likeness, and the more certainly will the savor of His good ointments be spread abroad. And this will be a mighty testimony to what He is, for in this case His name will, through us, be as ointment poured forth; the sweet savor of the name of Christ will flow forth from our walk as well as from our words. The Apostle Paul uses the very words in speaking of his preaching, when he says, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ," and in a subsequent chapter (2 Cor. 4), he points out that testimony is connected with the life as well as with the lip. As we meditate upon it, may we not say, "What a privilege! What a mission, to be sent out into the world to make known the savor of the good ointments of Christ, that His name may through us be as ointment poured forth!"

The effect of this has yet to be noticed: "therefore do the virgins love thee." The fragrance of the name of Jesus attracts the hearts of the virgins. A very distinct thought is connected in Scripture with the virgin. It is character, moral character, speaking as it does of the absence of defilement, and of uncontamination with the polluting influences of the world (see Rev. 14:4). Virgins, therefore, typify in this scripture those who have been enabled, through grace, to maintain a holy

separation from the defilement of the scene through which they are passing, those whose hearts have been kept true to Christ, and guarded in loyalty to Him through the sense of His claims and of His love. A heart possessed of Christ is fortified against the most seductive allurements of the world. It is absorbing affection which always distinguishes the virgin, and this affection is ever intensified and deepened by every new discovery of the perfection of Christ. In other words, those who partake of the virgin character always respond to the display of the preciousness of Christ. He being the sole object of their hearts, they are in the condition of soul to enter into and enjoy His beauties. They will detect His presence, the blessed fragrance of His words and His acts, where others will observe nothing. They live in His presence; they are wholly for Him, and hence it is the delight of Christ to disclose Himself to them in such attractive ways as to elicit and increase their affections toward Himself.

It follows from what has been said that the state of our souls may be discerned by the effect produced upon us by the name of Jesus. If our hearts are careless and irresponsive when He is the subject of conversation or presentation, we cannot be in communion with the heart of God. Why, even the name of a beloved object on earth will produce pleasurable emotions. How much more should the name of Christ, the object of God's heart - and also of ours, if we know Him - awaken within us holy feelings of delight, which can only be expressed in praise and adoration!

A Few Thoughts on John's Gospel

Our Lord begins action in John 8 by sovereign power and a new grace which is continued in the four following chapters. This new action is consequent upon His return from "the mount of Olives," with which the first seven chapters ended.

It is dispensationally in keeping (and will be morally so, too, in His future dealings with Israel) to find Him "early in the morning" in the temple, sitting down to teach the people. Equally in character with this position on His part was the act of the scribes and Pharisees, who brought before Him the "woman taken in adultery," that He who alone could pass judgment on the sin should take this place, and in righteousness condemn her. This scene not merely opens out the trespass to which their thoughts and intentions were limited, but has a far wider and more serious application to the nation and its rulers, under the guilt of whoredom and adultery, which should have lain heavily upon their consciences in the presence of their Jehovah-Jesus! Is not this the iniquity which has first to be judged and tried by the bitter water of jealousy, according to "the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled"? Numb. 5:29. Prophet after prophet had been sent unto them, mentioning this sin: "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord." Jer. 3:20.

The scribes and Pharisees, who brought the woman and accused her, declared that "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned," but they are not in the current of His own thoughts about the deeper trespass which had been brought to light by His own presence in their midst. How could He judge or condemn the woman, and not in righteous jealousy curse them?

They had set her "in the midst," and demanded, "What sayest Thou?" To His eye they had by their own act set themselves in the midst with her. Passing beyond the laws of Moses (see Num. 5:31) into the depths of His own feelings about them, He refused to accept their accusation. Long ago, He had sent Jeremiah, saying, "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (chap. 2:2); now one greater than a prophet had come to win their hearts back to Himself by His own grace. If He applied the law of Moses to the nation, as the accusers wished Him to do toward the adulteress, He must have taken "holy water in an earthly vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor... and put it into the water," (Num. 5:17) and as a priest of the tabernacle bring up the question before the Lord. This He refuses to do.

He passes into His own heights and depths of love (cost what it may in the end) to justify Himself in not condemning either the woman in her sin or the nation in its greater trespass. "Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not," for in the love which had brought Him among them, and in which He was come to work, the sin of her who was taken in the act, and the sin of Israel, though equally deserving of righteous judgment, were written on His heart in grace. He who came out from God, came not to put her away, but to put away her sin, and to cleanse her and make her whiter than snow. Viewed in this light, how significant of their state,

and of His own purpose in love, are the words which He spoke to them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground." He rolls the sins and the accusers away from the floor, and thus purges it; nor will He gather up the dust thereof in any earthen vessel, or prepare the bitter water of jealousy between Him and them. He walks in a higher path of His own, which only He could take, and so goes out of the midst and away from all their accusations, and questionings saying to them, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He was left alone and the woman standing in the midst. "When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

As "the light of life," He has thus purged His floor cleaner than by the law of stoning! Blessed One, who had come to make the sin His own and eventually pass into the ground and take the curse Himself, and die the death, that what He wrote upon the ground in the day of His grace may (whenever gathered up in jealousy) be pardoned and obliterated by the blood of atonement, through the depths of His own sufferings.

Chapter 8 introduces the national charge of Israel's departure and estrangement from Him who had espoused her to Himself, and had come after her. Chapter 9 is equally significant as showing their individual state and national blindness. As the former is portrayed, by the woman taken in adultery, so the latter is by "a man which was blind from his birth." The state of the nation was not in either case beyond the typical virtue of the balm of Gilead, or the skill of the great Physician, and this instance only calls forth the power and grace of Him whose prerogative it is to give sight to the blind.

It is remarkable that Jesus refuses to take up the blind man's case in the form in which the disciples viewed it when they asked, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" He will not look at it in this light any more than He will judge the treacherousness of the nation by the woman. In the governmental ways and dealings of God with men upon the earth, such a question might fairly arise as this, for He did visit "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Taken outside the responsibility of man, however, and viewed in connection with the counsels of the Father and the Son, "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

In the pathway of the Word made flesh we follow Jesus thus showing "forth His glory"; and so the man that was born blind as well as the woman taken in adultery serve as vessels for its display; yes, to the condemnation of those who stood around in unbelief and said they saw. As "the light of the world," He passed out from the temple and from the midst of the woman and her accusers. In His true greatness, He refused to use that light in which He walked for condemnation, though He commanded it to shine in upon the consciences of each, so that all were convicted and made their escape from its searching power, "beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

There was yet another use of the light, and that is what we are now considering in the case of the man born blind: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Jesus not merely opens the eyes of the blind by sovereign power, but gives Himself as the object of sight to the man and to the nation, if they will accept Him. Also He was the light without which the eye, though opened, could not behold Him! In view of this, Jesus said: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Day and night obtain new meaning when they are looked at in reference to Christ's continuance and work upon earth. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." The dust of the floor, the water, and the earthen vessel which would have made up the compound in the hand of the priest for the infliction of the curse and the rot, upon the trial of jealousy and unfaithfulness, had been refused. (Numbers 5). Instead, we learn the virtues of the spittle, the ground, and the mystic clay in the hand of Him that is come to work the works of God. Jesus said to the man, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." The dust of the ground, out of which the first man was made in the image of God, had been cursed because of transgression and Satan; now, under the power of Christ, it is reclaimed and made available by the "sent" One through His spittle by bestowing an eye of faith to behold Him who came to bear away every curse, and turn the curse into a blessing.

The light which had filled the temple and emptied it of every accuser (how could they abide in its searching power?), leaving the woman alone with Jesus, does the same thing among the scribes and Pharisees when the man who "was born blind" is brought into their midst. "If this man were not of God," he says to them, "He could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And, they cast him out."

Jesus and the woman had been left alone. Now the man who had walked in darkness all his days receives the light of life from Christ, confessed His sovereign power, is turned out of the synagogue and follows Him. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Two precious assurances flow from the lips of Jesus upon this inquiry, as He unveils Himself to the outcast one; "Thou hast both seen Him [the new object to the opened eye], and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped Him."

Thus new relationships are formed which lead the Lord to take (in chapter 10) the place of the Shepherd to this outcast sheep, and to declare His love for the flock as well as His protecting care against every foe. He reveals the secret of the interest which the Father's love, as well as His own, have over the sheep. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

We cannot fail to notice in these narratives how Jesus comes into the world, accepting it in the condition it was in through Adam's sin and Satan's power in death, to show Himself equal to every claim which the misery and wants of those in it daily brought across His path. More than this we see how He passes through the world with the Father, in another and higher character as Creator, the heavens and the earth and all that they contain were made by Him. Earlier in this gospel Jesus

said to the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," introducing thus a power which could turn everything to His own glory and the development of the hidden purposes of divine love. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." In this equality with God, there cannot be any uncertainty as to the nature of this new power, or of its exercise. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" is its scope, and we are the blessed objects in whom it is made good.

A Few Thoughts on John's Gospel

In John 11 our Lord passes into a yet further glory upon the death of Lazarus. He acts by sovereign power in His higher titles, as "the resurrection and the life." Here Jesus refuses to discourse with His disciples about death, as they viewed it in relation to Lazarus, but teaches them to look at it in the presence of Himself and His Father, that they may understand Him and the new doctrine which He declares. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." How could He act in character as "the resurrection and the life," without a Lazarus who was dead and buried, who had been in the grave four days already, and of whom those who loved him said, "by this time he stinketh"? Fearful indeed are death, the grave and corruption when looked at in their condemning and separating powers in relation to God in His righteousness and to man upon whom death was inflicted on account of sin. All men are guilty under the weight of this penalty, and every mouth is stopped at the grave of Lazarus. Jesus is alone here with God, in the presence of Satan and his greatest power!

Lazarus was dead while the man born blind (John 9) was still left alive in this world, and so was the woman who was taken in adultery and who had forfeited her own right to life to the curse of the law she had broken (John 8). But "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." Jesus took this place in the temple and passed before the scribes and Pharisees as the light of it; but they left Him alone with the convicted woman as "the light" to her, who under the law, which they used, was appointed to death. He had also come to the man who was born blind and had so filled his vessel with "the light" from Himself, that the man needed only to learn further that the Person who had brought "life" to him was "the Son of God."

These were happy deliverances for themselves and trophies for Him who was passing thus through the world with a power that was able to remove the very causes of human misery, to find a new use for them for "the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This is what the Lord is doing as "the potter" with clay, and under His skill everything is seen to suit Him and serve His purpose very well for glory or beauty just as it is!

The language and actings of Him who now comes into Bethany as "the resurrection and the life," are all in correspondence with this title. "He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." In the hands of Him that quickeneth and raiseth, "this sickness is not unto death," though, speaking after the manner of men, Lazarus was dead, buried, and in a state of corruption. The faith of Martha and Mary which recognized a "resurrection at the last day" (for this was their hope) also must embrace Jesus in the light of His own perfections "while it is called to-day." They must learn all these lessons afresh in this connection with the Son of God. "The last day" does not apply when Jesus is in their very midst to act as the resurrection and the

life.

We may well challenge our hearts upon the importance of such a revelation of the person of Christ as we are considering. Now that Christ has come, we are "taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus." Eph. 4:21. Old things are passed away in His creation, so that "sickness... unto death" and almost everything else which is the natural order and relation in Adam have given place to a new order in the Son of God, who was dead but is alive again and lives forevermore and has "the keys of hell and of death."

How slowly we make room, like the two sisters and the group at Bethany, for the display of "the glory of God." His glory is so far above and beyond all that sin and Satan brought into the world placing man under the cruel bondage of death and corruption. How often we forget that the very Son of God took it all upon Himself at the cross, to be glorified thereby. He went down to the grave by means of death, and up to the right hand of the throne of God in glory by means of resurrection! What a pathway of trespass and guilt - sin and blindness - sickness and death - these chapters have opened up, and what misery would they still record if Jesus had not passed through the midst as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He made all its stumbling-blocks

His own stepping-stones up to the right hand of the Father and the crown of glory which adorns the Victor's brow.

"When Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But in this confidence of her love, she is not near enough to His own heart, in the secret of all that He is, as the Son of God, for the objects of His affection, for "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." He did not come to reach His glory by preventing death, as Mary supposed (for He abode two days in the same place where He was), but came to win His spoils by means of death, and to bring in the Father of glory in due season to His own sepulcher, that He might raise and glorify His Son with other glories besides those which He had with Him "before the world was."

We notice here that this visit of Jesus as the Son of God to Bethany, and the rolling away of the stone to bring out the man who lay therein with a napkin about his face and "bound hand and foot with graveclothes," is a companion picture to the "exceeding high mountain" in the other gospels, upon which Jesus stood and was transfigured before His disciples. His face shone' as the sun and His raiment was white as the light when "He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 2 Pet. 1:17. The Son of man in righteousness, thus revealed to us by His transfiguration upon "the holy mount," was at His height in majesty and glory upon the earth. By contrast, Lazarus in his grave, "bound hand and foot with graveclothes," under the power of death, was sunk down into the depths of corruption! These two extremes are met in the Person of the Son, who passes through John's gospel, not so much in the coming and majesty and glory of His earthly kingdom as in the veiled power and title of "the only begotten of the Father," to work the works of God for the glory of God. So it was said concerning Lazarus, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

The work, the sad work of Satan, is before the Son of God at the grave of Lazarus where man who was made in the image of God has been laid in the separating power of death, the keys of which the usurper held upon the grave and over the captive dead, buried out of sight from those who were in tears at the felt desolation of that hour. A groan goes up to God from the heart of Jesus who has come into such a scene of helplessness and misery to "work the works of God" in the face of Satan's power at the grave's mouth. The groan found its answer between the Father and the Son, and "Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always." Nor is this new work of Jesus as "the resurrection and the life" to be only for the glory of God (as the first object, always before His Son), but in truest sympathy and love for the oppressed and bereaved, He adds, "because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

In whatever way this grace could associate others with itself in such an act, it is always the delight of His unjealous love to do it! How like Himself it is, when Jesus bids them begin this mighty action, saying, "Take ye away the stone" - an act only to be rivaled, when all was over, by the same love which bade them, "Loose him and let him go." What a moment for them, for they did it! The groan to God brought its answer from above to the opened ears of Jesus. Perfect in the expression of His sympathy to the sorrowing and helpless ones with whom Jesus wept, they looked that these tears should be wiped away by power from Him, as the Son of God. Jesus is left in possession of the entire scene, and "cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot." A new thing had been wrought already in the man who walked about upon the earth with his eyes opened by means of the clay which Jesus made out of it. Now a greater wonder is to be wrought in reply to the groan, the tears and the loud cry, for Lazarus comes forth from the depths of the grave at the bidding of Jesus the Son of God passing through the ruins as "the resurrection and the life." The Savior has won back all that the enemy had plucked from the hands of men, from Adam in paradise to Solomon in his kingdom and majesty in Jerusalem, as declared when He was transfigured upon the holy mount. In this gospel He comes down from that height, that He might be seen also to enter into the palace of the strong man and spoil his goods, and take from him all his armor wherein he trusted.

A Few Thoughts on John's Gospel

John 12 presents Bethany under quite another aspect after the triumphant resurrection of Lazarus. It is no longer the house of weeping, for "There they made Him [Jesus] a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus [whom the grave and corruption had given back out of the tomb of death] was one of them that sat at the table with Him." Only one crowning act remains to be done for "the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby," in order that the counsels of the Father and our eternal blessing may be established beyond the reach of Satan's power, and outside the range of sin and the judgment of God. Who could take up this work, and by what new paths in life or death, incarnation or ascension, could such an end be reached, but by the Son of God come down from above, in the mystery of "the Word... made flesh"? Only He might accomplish it. In this spirit, Mary took "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment."

Elias and Moses, the two men who appeared in glory on the top of the exceeding high mountain, spoke with Jesus of "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." He carried this secret down with Him into the house of Bethany, that He might declare it to those whom He loved, and in connection with this anointing.

To the natural thoughts of Judas this use of the ointment is only waste, and it should have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor. Mary is in the current of her Lord's thoughts, however, and He said, "Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this." The act of Mary had this significance to the heart of Jesus, and He prepares Himself for the path by which the causes of human misery, and God's dishonor, and the world's bondage, should be met and overcome. Long ago the Spirit of prophecy had cried, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction," and now He is come, to whom that finger pointed. Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, speaks to His Father about it, and says about Himself, 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' He who proved Himself as "the resurrection and the life" at the grave of Lazarus, has in view His last and greatest work - expiation for the guilty. He is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

God the Father of Glory may then take His new place, and raise up Jesus out of His grave on the third day, as the proof of His own glory over sin by death, and of our redemption, for "God... hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5:20,21. A deeper path than all these groans and tears at the grave of Lazarus opened itself to our Lord, and Jesus said, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."

It is no longer merely Adam's sin that is in question, or the transgressions of his posterity, multiplied as they may be, for "God manifest in flesh" has come into the midst of the family as a man, and has defeated every adverse power in His own Person at the cross. Satan's usurped rights over man were challenged and set aside by the perfect obedience in life and death of the last Adam. The Lord Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, and when the temptations were ended, He said, "Get thee hence, Satan." So again, in Gethsemane, when "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," in the knowledge that this was Satan's hour and the power of darkness, still He accepted it in the confidence that it was the path of the pre-determinate counsel that led to the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby in life and in death, and at the right hand of the Father!

Obedience unto death was the only measure of His perfection as the faithful servant who loved his master, his wife, and his children, and would not go out free. The sin and the iniquity of His own people, the flesh, the world, and Satan, the majesty and righteousness of God in their own nature, as well as in holy judgment against all evil, were gathered up by Christ at that hour, and made His own care at the cross. He not only vindicated the rights of God in His ways with men in government, but glorified the Father according to His own essential being and Godhead; in doing this, He proved at the same time who this Son of man must be, who did it. He who in grace to us and in infinite love to the Father made all these His own care, wrought them out in His atoning sufferings and death when "He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."

In the righteous judgment which He bore, as the Just One for the unjust, it follows that the prince of this world must be cast out. In the same judgment which He took, and because of it, He further said, "Now is the judgment of this world." Unrighteousness must in due time be publicly judged by God from heaven, because righteousness in the suffering victim was cast out by the world and its prince, and Jesus was with the Father. As to Himself, in grace to us, Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die."

How much His people owe to that blessed Savior! He has broken through every yoke - borne the curse - put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself - annulled him that had the power of death (that is, the devil) - brought life and incorruptibility to light - and set us in relationship with Himself, and with His Father as our Father, and with His God as our God!

Chapter 12 closes, however, "in darkness" as regards those in whose midst He was thus shining forth as the light of life. He had lit up the darkest places of the earth by taking possession of them in His own glory, and so drawing out "the sting of death" itself, if they would only let Him, because He could not be holden of it. But they listened to the law instead of beholding the glory of the Son, and said, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" and they too are offended at Him. Nevertheless, Jesus presents Himself once more to them in this group of chapters as the light of life, saying, "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light," lest darkness come upon you.

Like the accusers of chapter 8, who went out one by one, and left Jesus alone with the woman, or like the scribes and Pharisees who cast out of the synagogue the man blind from his birth, who confessed Jesus and worshiped Him, so these in their turn compel Jesus to take an action for Himself (a last and final one), but in judgment against them. "These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them"! The sun which had risen in such brightness upon them, and shed its beams across their path, has gone down in obscurity - and set, till another day, because of their unbelief. They have lost Jesus, and the light of the world has left it!

The first seven chapters of this Gospel ended by every man going to his own house, "and Jesus... unto the mount of Olives"; they then parted company till His feet shall stand thereon another day. These five chapters finish, as we have seen, by Jesus' hiding Himself from them and from the world. Chapters 13 and onward open the new and blessed subject of the Father's house, and of our union there by grace in all the counsels of the Father, to the glory of the departed One who is the Son of His own love.

The King in His Beauty

It is a great point for us to seek to cultivate in our souls that which comes out in this psalm. The queen is occupied with what the King is Himself. We should be occupied, in like manner, with what Christ is. We are very apt to drop down into occupation with the blessings which His gracious hand bestows upon us, but in this psalm it is not what the King does, but what He is, that is dwelt upon. What the Lord values is a heart that delights in Himself.

"My heart is inditing a good matter." The margin shows the meaning of inditing to be boiling, or bubbling up. I fear we are not often in this state. It is a great thing to have the heart boiling up with love to Christ. Instead of this, we are often far from the boiling point in the measure of our devotedness to Christ. What the "good matter" is, the verse explains: "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King"; that is, I speak of what I know of Him - not what I have received from Him, but what He is to me. It is the place His blessed Person has in my soul.

Mary chose to be with Himself. She sat at His feet and listened to His words. To be near and with Him was what her soul desired. Affection for the Lord marked her condition, and her place was at His feet. She was absorbed with the Person of Christ. And did she lack intelligence? No, but it was not her object. She broke her box of precious ointment over Him, and Jesus said, "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this." Others made a feast for Him, but Mary's act was in keeping with the circumstances of her Lord. She was at the feast, yet it did not occupy her. The One for whom the feast was made, did. Her heart boiled with love to Him. She was the only one there really in the current of His thoughts. May the Lord by His Spirit make our hearts to bubble up with real, true love to Christ!

"My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." It is easy to speak of Christ, and to praise Him, when the heart is bubbling up with love to Him. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If we are silent in worship and praise, it shows the heart must be empty. Christ as an object does not fill the affections. You say, "The Spirit must move us to worship." Yes, but if there is not worship, it is evident you are not moved. It is quite true we are to be subject in the worship of the assembly to the leading of the Holy Spirit. So we are taught in the first epistle to the Corinthians, but in this psalm there is subjection to the Spirit of God, and withal a heart overflowing with that which it knows concerning the King. I envy the state of soul here manifested. Listen to the language: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips." The address is to Himself. She is so near she can speak to Him. This is further than the bride in the Song of Solomon ever goes. She says much about her Beloved, but not to Him. He is to her the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One, but the one here is so near she can speak to the King, and all slips out so easily: "Therefore God hath blessed Thee forever." In such intimate nearness there is acquaintance with the mind of God as to His purpose concerning the One He delights to honor.

"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness." There is a right sense of the majesty of His Person. He was outraged by man, and the puny but guilty arm of man

had been raised against Him in the hour of betrayal and falsehood. The day will come, however, when He shall ride prosperously because of truth. He was the meek and lowly One, but "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," and the result of His lowly grace would be His exaltation. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." He is anointed above His fellows; He is pre-eminent. Who are these fellows? Heb. 2 shows that we are His fellows: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He leads praise in their midst (Heb. 2:11, 12). And again we read, "We are made partakers [or fellows] of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Heb. 3:14. He is anointed with the oil of gladness, and the precious ointment drops from the head to the skirts of His garments. In the day of Christ's glory, when He will ride prosperously, we shall be with Him, and shall share that glory; the oil of His gladness will drop on us.

"All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad." There is fragrance in Christ, and that should come out in us. "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ." 2 Cor. 2:15.

"Kings' daughters were among Thy honorable women: upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." When the King is spoken of, the bride is Jerusalem, so this psalm has a millennial bearing.

Israel will look on Him whom she rejected and pierced, and will mourn. The Lord will save His people from their sins, and in divine righteousness will give them a place in His presence. "Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." Then will she consider, and incline her ear to Him. She is to forget her own people and her father's house. But what does this teach us? That there must be the bringing in of Christ between the soul and everything here. Nature must be distanced by Him; I must forget it. Christ must be my first object. Is He the first consideration with us? or is self and our houses, and the care of them - the family, the friend, or the father's house? The Spirit of God here says: "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house"; and Jesus said: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Matt. 10:37.

"So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." He will then see beauty in you; you will then be for Christ what Eve was to Adam. There is also the other side: "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." The claims of the Lord weigh with those who have Christ as their object. What joy when our souls in any measure enter into this Christ eclipsing everything, and worship freely flowing out to Him. And we read of the beauty of the King's daughter, that she is "all glorious within." Here are her moral adornings, graced in the virtues of Christ. His beauty is that in which she shines, and because of it He gets praise: "Therefore shall the people praise Thee."

The Lord by His Spirit keep His dear Son before each of our hearts, that we may have the sense that He is ever near and with us, and that we walk with Him. "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

"My heart is full of Christ, and longs

Its glorious matter to declare.

Of Him I make my loftier songs;
I cannot from His praise forbear.
My ready tongue makes haste to sing
The glories of the heavenly King.
"Fairer than all the earth-born race,
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;
Replenished are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart.
God ever blest, we bow the knee,
And own all fullness dwells in Thee."

Knowing and Obeying

With the passion to know, was an equal passion to obey, and this was the twofold secret of the Apostle Paul's unparalleled service, and the key to all discipleship.

Known and Searched

Psalm 139

"O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising." And in verse 3, "Thou...art acquainted with all my ways." Now think for a moment of the intimate knowledge God has of all our actions. It is very solemn, and it is not a pleasant thing for a sinner to learn, but it is the first step to blessing, and ends in nothing but blessing.

The Psalm divides itself into two parts - from the first to the thirteenth verse, and from the fourteenth to the end. In the first part the soul finds itself thoroughly known and exposed, and the desire is to get away from God. This is found to be impossible. Then, when it is fairly driven into a corner, it learns God's heart and works, and the result is praise.

Have you ever observed that God condescends to mark every little circumstance connected with you, and that He is concerned with little things as well as big? Even the seed you sow in your fields is quickened by God. Each individual seed is acted on by His power. I have been struck with this lately in reading Deut. 22:6 and 7. Think of God's telling the Israelites what to do with a bird's nest! Here we read, in the second verse, that He understands our thoughts. Now men are sometimes ashamed of their actions, and do not like to have them known, but what do you think of your thoughts being exposed? No one would like that. Well, God knows them all. "Thou...understandest my thought afar off." And again, "There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." The result of finding this out is simply to make one honest with God.

In verse 5 we read, "Thou hast beset me behind and before." The presence of God is everywhere. All around you, wherever you go, you are never out of it, though you may not be consciously there. You may desire to get away from it, but it is impossible. You cannot get away. Even darkness cannot hide from Him; "The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." It is thus the soul is compelled to have to do with God. If you do not, be assured of this, you must have to do with Him hereafter. Do you remember the two thieves? One of them was honest about himself in time. He condemned himself and acknowledged the judgment that had overtaken him as just, and "the due reward" of his deeds. He turned to the Lord Jesus, who hung on the cross beside him, acknowledged Him as Lord, and got far more than he asked - an entrance into paradise that day in company with the Lord Himself. Depend upon it; having to do with God is the beginning of blessing. Saul, in Acts 9, was brought into the conscious presence of God. There he learned what he was and what he had done, and that the One against whom he had sinned was his Savior. Thus he was converted.

In verse 14 of our Psalm, we have, "I will praise Thee," etc. Many can talk of God as Creator, but it is another thing to talk of Him as Redeemer. Here the soul not only knows and speaks of His works, but knows His thoughts, and finds them precious. What do we know about His thoughts and heart? We get them unfolded in John 3:16 - "God so loved" etc. The gospel all comes from God's side. The rejecters of it are reckoned among the "fearful" in Rev. 21:8. If God would save

sinners, He must do it in a righteous way. Judgment must fall on another. The cross of Christ shows this. He was obedient unto death, and He was the only One of whom that could ever have been said. It is not obedience for us to die. We have no right to live. He had; He had never forfeited His life; it was His own. But in Isaiah 53 we read that it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and that the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. This was the work of redemption, and God thought so much of it that He raised Him from the dead and set Him on His own throne.

In verse 23 of our Psalm, we have one who knows God's thoughts, and what is his language? "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts," etc. Am I now afraid of His making any discoveries, or His heart being turned from me? No. We have many discoveries to make about ourselves. God has none. He knew us when we had done our worst. He knows all.

The Last Adam

The door of Eden was shut against man (Gen. 3:24), yet the Lord opens a way for a people to share the glory connected with Himself.

Christ was not only the repository of all the affections of the Father's heart, but was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. Is it the perfection of what Christ is in Himself that we have as the ground-work to rest on before God? No; not this alone. More was needed, but it was the divine perfection that filled Him for the work He came to do. None but a being absolutely and altogether perfect could be a sin-bearer; the least thing God could find fault with in Him would have spoiled it all. The beauty of Christ is precious to the heart as showing forth that perfection. God can say of Him, "I let all My billows go over Him and He only came forth the more bright"; He was made the substitute for sinners, and it is on the truth of this that I am standing before God and rejoicing in it. It is this which connects a soul with Christ. It is the only way my soul can get any power whatever to walk in joy. I remember how the "great white throne" used to stare me in the face; I could never get any rest of soul connected with what I was as a young man dead in sin. How, I thought, shall I be able to bear the light of it?

But what 's the effect of it now when I think of it? I realize that I shall see Him there who bore the whole wrath due to me. The whole power of that wrath came into His soul, and when He had borne my sins in His own body on the cross, and put them away forever, God raised Him to His own right hand, soon to come again and take His people there too; in the interval God sent me the message that He had been my substitute. I have been very feeble in confessing Him as my substitute, but it enables me to say I have done with the first Adam; God sees me in the last Adam. He could not set aside my guilt save by giving the curse due to me to the last Adam on the cross. It is only by closing with His offer that I can say I have set my seal to the truth of that work on the cross having saved me, and given me rest.

Live Thou and Thy Children of the Rest

2 Kings 4:7

Who has not read the deeply interesting story of the widow's pot of oil in the fourth chapter of 2 Kings, and the gracious intervention of God by His servant Elisha to save the widow's sons from being taken as slaves in payment of her debts? Many a time, too, the miraculous multiplication of the pot of oil and its sale to pay the widow's debts, has been used as an illustration of the grace of God in pardoning those who cast themselves on God's mercy, confessing they have nothing wherewith to pay their obligations to Him.

It recalls at once the words of the Lord Jesus in the house of the Pharisee (Luke 7:40-43), when He sought to reach that poor proud heart by the simple story of the two debtors - the one owing five hundred pence, and the other, fifty - but when they had nothing to pay, the creditor frankly forgave them both.

We who have through grace found the deepest blessing in taking our place among the bankrupt debtors rejoice in the free, full forgiveness of our sins. But there is more than this typified in the story of the widow's pot of oil, and we think some of the many blessings peculiar to Christianity are beautifully illustrated in the words of the prophet, "Live thou and thy children of the rest." It tells us that in the gospel of the grace of God there is not only made known the forgiveness of sins, and justification "from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39), but that there is something provided to live upon, a gracious provision for the believer, to meet his need all through the journey.

Let us take a simple illustration. When a prisoner has served the term of his sentence, and is discharged from prison, he is often more in need of help than at any moment of his life. It is true that the law has no further claim upon him; he has fulfilled his sentence. The law however, offers no help, nor makes any provision for his future, although he might have lost his situation and been estranged from his friends as a result of his crime. So again with a debtor - a generous friend may pay his debts, and leave him without a fear of any creditor's demands, but does he not need something to provide against getting into debt again? He wants, like the widow and her sons, some provision to live upon, and this is just the special feature of the fullness of the gospel which we wish to point out.

It has been said that it is easier to die a martyr than to live a Christian, and we can understand the point of view from which such a remark was made. Not many days ago, a poor widow said to the writer, "The hardest thing in this world is to live as a Christian," but she knew nothing of the more blessed side of the gospel, or the joy of a living, loving Savior in heaven, at all times ready and willing to help His tried and troubled people.

To some it has become a hackneyed phrase to speak of our three great enemies, "The world, the flesh, and the devil," but it is nonetheless true that we have these three enemies, and if we measure our own strength against them, we may well be dismayed. And we shall be worsted in

the combat too. But let us look briefly at the provision for the way - what is it that answered to the words, "Live thou and thy children of the rest"?

Let us glance at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Romans, for example, and we shall find that we are started with "peace with God" as the result of being justified on the principle of faith. Then in equally precise terms we are told that by the same blessed Person (Christ) "we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand." Who can adequately describe the value of such a privilege as this for our everyday needs? There is never a time or circumstance, difficulty or trial, that can alter or affect this wondrous access, or close that door against us. We do not, like queen Esther, wait at a distant part of the audience chamber to see if the royal scepter is extended toward us before we approach to make our requests known or seek the needed strength for conflict. No; the One who gave Himself for us, who died to bring us to God, is there in His presence, our High Priest and Advocate, and we are thus emboldened to approach, whatever our felt weakness may be. Neither is joy lacking, for the same finished work has secured for us a share in the glory of God, and we rejoice in the hope of it while on the way to it.

But notice the word, "not only so," "much more than"; how often they occur in this wonderful chapter. We can only call the briefest attention to them. There are sure to be tribulations in our path, but we need not get under them, but rather glory in them. Then look also at the ninth verse, and ponder what is meant by being "saved from the wrath through Him."

Again in the tenth verse we read, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." We are preserved, helped, sustained, and shielded by the living Savior who lives for us on high as a watchful and unwearied shepherd. Is this not something more than being cleared from all charges and knowing that God now has nothing against us? It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to say that "saved by His life," in the tenth verse, has no reference to the life of the Lord Jesus on the earth before the cross. In that sense, as we all know, our salvation is by His death, the atoning death of the cross - by His bloodshedding. But it is the life of Christ where He is now that this passage refers to, and what a precious thought it is for the tried and troubled Christian.

The eleventh verse touches a higher note still, and declares that "not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So there is not only provision for the way, and encouragement in tribulation and trials, but joy of the highest and deepest character - joy in God Himself.

We began our new life in Christ with "a clean slate" (as the world speaks); "Every charge our God refuses, Christ has answered with His blood." But not only so, we are amply provided for, whether the journey be long or short; we are of those "which receive abundance of grace," and "shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." So in a very special and blessed way the prophet's words apply, "Live thou and thy children of the rest." Let us not be discouraged, dear fellow believer, whatever the strength of the forces arrayed against us may appear to be. The Lord Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14:19. And as to the world, He reminds us, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

There is even much more than this, for we are started with a new life, eternal life, a new power, the Holy Spirit, and a new Object and hope, Christ in glory. But the consideration of these would take

us beyond our present thought of showing how the riches of God's grace in Christ have furnished the Christian "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Eph. 3:20.

The Living God and a Living Faith: Lessons From Jehoshaphat

There is one vital fact pervading every page of the Word of God, and illustrated in every stage of the history of God's people - a fact of immense weight and moral power at all times, but especially in seasons of darkness, difficulty, and discouragement occasioned by the low condition of things among those who profess to be on the Lord's side. The fact is this: That faith can always count on God, and God will always answer faith.

If we turn for a few moments to 2 Chron. 20, we will find a very beautiful and a very striking illustration of this fact.

This chapter shows us the good king Jehoshaphat under very heavy pressure indeed; it records a dark moment in his history. "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then" - for people are always quick to broadcast evil tidings - "there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria." Here was a difficulty of no ordinary nature. This invading host was made up of the descendants of Lot and Esau, and this fact might give rise to a thousand conflicting thoughts and distracting questions in the mind of Jehoshaphat. They were not Egyptians or Assyrians, concerning whom there could be no question whatever, but both Esau and Lot stood in relationship to Israel, and a question might suggest itself as to how far such relations were to be recognized.

Nor was this the only consideration. The practical state of the entire nation of Israel - the actual condition of God's people - was such as to give rise to the most serious misgivings. Israel no longer presented an unbroken front to an invading foe. Their visible unity was gone. A grievous breach had been made in their battlements. The ten tribes and the two were rent asunder. The condition of the former was terrible, and that of the latter, shaky enough.

The circumstances of king Jehoshaphat's reign were dark and discouraging, and even as regards himself and his practical course, he was just emerging from the consequences of a very humiliating fall. Thus his reminiscences were as cheerless as his surroundings.

But it is just here that this one vital fact presents itself to the vision of faith, and flings a mantle of light over the whole scene. Things looked gloomy, no doubt, but God was to be counted upon by faith, and faith could count upon Him. God is a never-failing resource - a great reality at all times and under all circumstances. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Psalm 46:1-3.

Here then was Jehoshaphat's resource in the day of his trouble, and he at once betook himself to it in that earnest faith which never fails to draw down power and blessing from the living and true God to meet every exigency of the way. "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the

Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask the help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee? Art not Thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever?"

These are the fine breathings of a lively faith - a faith that always enables the soul to take the very highest possible ground. It mattered not in the smallest degree what unsettled questions there might be between Esau and Jacob; there were none between Abraham and the Almighty God. Now, God had given the land to Abraham His friend. For how long? Forever. This was enough. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Rom. 11:29. God will never cancel His call, or take back a gift. This is a fixed foundation principle, and on this, faith always firmly takes its stand. The enemy might throw up a thousand reasonings, but simple faith casts them all aside.

Now it was on this original ground that Jehoshaphat rightly took his stand. It was the only thing for him to do. He had not one hair's breadth of solid standing ground short of this defense: "Thou... gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever." It was either this or nothing. A living faith always lays hold on the living God. It cannot stop short of Him. It does not look at men or their circumstances. It takes no account of the changes and chances of this mortal life. It lives and moves and has its being in the immediate presence of the living God; it rejoices in the cloudless sunlight of His blessed countenance. It conducts all its artless searchings in the sanctuary, and draws all its happy conclusions from facts discovered there. It does not lower the standard according to the condition of things around, but boldly and decidedly takes up its' position on the very highest ground.

Now these actings of faith are always most gratifying to the heart of God. The living God delights in a living faith. We may be quite sure that the bolder the grasp of faith, the more welcome it is to God. We need never suppose that the blessed One is either gratified or glorified by the workings of a legal mind. No, no; He delights to be trusted without a shadow of reserve or misgiving. He delights to be fully counted upon and largely used, and the deeper the need and the darker the surrounding gloom, the more is He glorified by the faith that draws upon Him.

Hence we may assert with perfect confidence that the attitude and the utterances of Jehoshaphat in the scene before us were in full accordance with the mind of God. There is something perfectly beautiful to see him, as it were, opening the original lease and laying his finger on that clause in virtue of which Israel held the land as tenants forever under God. Nothing could cancel that clause or break that lease. No flaw there. All was ordered and sure. "Thou... gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever."

This was solid ground - the ground of God - the ground of faith which no power of the enemy can ever shake. True, the enemy might remind Jehoshaphat of sin and folly, failure and unfaithfulness. He might suggest to him that the very fact of the threatened invasion proved that Israel had fallen, for had they not done so, there would be neither enemy nor evil.

But for this, too, grace had provided an answer - an answer which faith knew well how to appropriate. Jehoshaphat reminds Jehovah of the house which Solomon had built to His name. "They... have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence, (for Thy name is in this house,) and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom Thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us

out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." vv. 8-12.

Here, truly, is a living faith dealing with a living God. It is no mere empty profession - no lifeless creed - no cold, unmotivating theory. It is not a man saying he has faith. Such things will never stand in the day of battle. They may do well enough when all is calm, smooth, and bright, but when difficulties have to be grappled with - when the enemy has to be met face to face - all nominal faith, all mere lip profession, will prove like autumn leaves before the blast. Nothing will stand the test of actual conflict but a living, personal faith in a living, personal Savior God. Faith brings God into the scene, and all is perfect peace.

Thus it was with the king of Judah in the days of 2 Chron. 20 "We have no might... neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." This is the way to occupy God's ground, even with the eyes fixed on God Himself. This is the true secret of stability and peace. The devil will leave no stone unturned to drive us off the true ground which, as Christians, we ought to occupy in these last days, and we in ourselves have no might whatever against him. Our only resource is in the living God. If our eyes are upon Him, nothing can harm us. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isa. 26:3.

We are passing through critical moments. Men are taking sides; principles are working and coming to a head. Never was it more needful to be thoroughly and unmistakably on the Lord's side. Jehoshaphat never could have met the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, had he not been persuaded that his feet were on the very ground which God had given to Abraham. If the enemy could have shaken his confidence as to this, he would have had an easy victory. But Jehoshaphat knew where he was; therefore he could fix his eyes with confidence upon the living God. His was a living faith in the living God - the only thing that will stand in the day of trial.

"They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." Isa. 49:23. Such is the veritable record of the living God - a record made good in the experience of all those who have been enabled through grace to exercise a living faith. But then we must remember how much is involved in those three words, "wait for Me." The waiting must be a real thing. It will not do to say we are waiting on God when in reality our eye is askance upon some human prop or creature confidence. We must be absolutely "shut up" to God. We must be brought to the end of self, and to the bottom of circumstances, in order to prove fully what the life of faith is, and what God's resources are. God and the creature can never occupy the same platform. It must be God alone. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation." Psalm 62:5, 6.

Thus it was with Jehoshaphat in that scene recorded in 2 Chron. 20 He was wholly cast upon God. "We have no might." But what then? "Our eyes are upon Thee." This was enough. It was well for Jehoshaphat not to have so much as a single atom of might - a single ray of knowledge. He was in the very best possible attitude and condition to prove what God was. It would have been an incalculable loss to him to have been possessed of the smallest particle of creature strength or creature wisdom, inasmuch as it could only have proved a hindrance to him in leaning exclusively upon the arm and the counsel of the Almighty God. If the eye of faith rests upon the living God - if He fills the entire range of the soul's vision - then what do we want with might or knowledge of our own? Who would think of resting in that which is human when he can have that which is divine? Who would lean on a arm of flesh when he can lean on the arm of the living God?

No sooner had Jehoshaphat cast himself completely upon the Lord, than the divine response fell with clearness and power upon his ear. "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you."

What an answer! "The battle is not yours, but God's." Only think of God's having a battle with people! Assuredly, there could be little question as to the issue of such a battle. Jehoshaphat had put the whole matter into God's hands, and God took it up and made it entirely His own. It is always thus. Faith puts the difficulty, the trial, and the burden into God's hands, and leaves Him to act. This is enough. God never refuses to respond to the appeal of faith; no, it is His delight to answer it. Jehoshaphat had made it a question between God and the enemy. They have "come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit." Nothing could be simpler. God had given Israel the land, and He could keep them in it in spite of ten thousand foes. Thus faith would reason. It was simply a question of divine power. "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee."

It is a wonderful point in the history of any soul to be brought to say, "I have no might." But the moment we take that ground, the word is, "Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Human effort in every shape and form can only raise a barrier between our souls and God's salvation. If God has undertaken for us, we may well be still. And has He not? Yes, blessed be His holy name, He has charged Himself with all that concerns us for time and eternity, and hence we have only to let Him act for us in all things. It is our happy privilege to let Him go before us, while we follow on "in wonder, love, and praise."

Thus it was in that interesting and instructive scene on which we have been dwelling. "Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high."

Here we have the true attitude and the proper occupation of the believer. Jehoshaphat withdrew his eyes from that great company that had come against him, and fixed them upon the living God. Jehovah had come right in and placed Himself between His people and the enemy, just as He had

done in the day of the exodus, at the Red Sea, so that instead of looking at the difficulties, they might look at Him.

This is the secret of victory at all times and under all circumstances. It is this which fills the heart with praise and thanksgiving, and bows the head in wondering worship. There is something perfectly beautiful in the entire bearing of Jehoshaphat and the congregation on the occasion before us. They were evidently impressed with the thought that they had nothing to do but to praise God. And they were right. Had He not said to them, "Ye shall not need to fight"? What then had they to do? Nothing but praise.

"And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chron. 20:20.

It is very important that God's Word should ever have its own supreme place in the heart of the Christian. God has spoken. He has given us His Word, and it is for us to lean unshaken thereon. The divine Word is amply sufficient to give confidence, peace, and stability to the soul. We do not need evidences from man to prove the truth of God's Word. That Word carries its own powerful evidences with it. To suppose that we require human testimony to prove that God's Word is true, is to imply that man's word is more valid, more trustworthy, more authoritative than the Word of God. If we need a human voice to interpret, to ratify, to make God's revelation available, then are we virtually deprived of that revelation altogether.

"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth forever." What a strange advance guard for an army! A company of singers! Such is faith's way of ordering the battle.

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord sent ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." Only think of the Lord sending ambushments! Think of His engaging in the business of military tactics! How wonderful! God will do anything that His people need if only His people will confide in Him, and leave themselves and their affairs absolutely in His hand.

"And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped." Such was the end of "that great company" - that formidable host - that terrible foe. All vanished away before the presence of the God of Israel. Yes, and had they been a million times more numerous and more formidable, the issue would have been the same, for circumstances are nothing to the living God, and nothing to a living faith. When God fills the vision of the soul, difficulties fade away, and songs of praise break forth from joyful lips.

"And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah [or blessing]; for there they blessed the Lord."

Such must ever be the result of a living faith in the living God. More than two thousand five hundred years have rolled away since the occurrence of the event on which we have been dwelling, but the record is as fresh as ever. No change has come over the living God, or over that living faith which ever takes hold of His strength, and counts on His faithfulness. May we then, through the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, ever be enabled to exercise a living faith in the living God!

The Lord's Approbation

It matters little whether I am doing great things or small things, whether I am appreciated by those whom I seek to serve or otherwise, whether I am prominent or obscure, whether I see much result or little. The one paramount question is, Am I in the place, circumstances, service and condition of soul which are pleasing to the Lord, so that I have the consciousness of His approbation?

There is joy in service and in seeing the fruit of service. There is joy in receiving help and edification through ministry. But the greatest joy is to be near the Lord in the consciousness of ministering to Him, and to know that He has pleasure in us. It is the delight of His love to have us wholly for Himself, and, through grace, it becomes the delight of our love to be so. This gives singleness of eye, and takes the heart off every object which it may have chosen for itself. It makes the will of the Lord the one thing which we care to consider. Then we are practically in the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, and He can not only acquaint us with His mind concerning us, but can bring us into all the blessedness of God's will in the full scope of His counsels and purposes.

A Man of the Pharisees

John 3:1

This expression is singular; it is not "a certain Pharisee," but "a man of the Pharisees," throwing the emphasis on man, and defining what kind of man Nicodemus was, by adding "of the Pharisees." This will more clearly appear from the context: "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man. There was a man of the Pharisees." The prominent point is "man," and what is "in man." Man can appreciate miracles and be forced by them to acknowledge the power and superiority of Him by whom they are wrought, and to render Him homage, and in human estimation this would be accredited as faith. But He who knew what was in man, did not so accredit it. The faith which is an inference of the human mind is not the faith in God which subjects man to God; on the contrary, it subjects God to human caprice - at one time acknowledging Him, at another, questioning either His being, presence or perfection. He who knew what was in man was the same Jehovah who had been with Israel of old as their deliverer, sustainer, and guide, proving Himself to be the only God by a constant succession of miracles. But this is His complaint against Israel: "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 swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it." Numb. 14:22, 23.

Miracles demonstrating to Israel the presence of God, left Israel indeed without excuse for not trusting in Him. But at the same time, the history of this generation in the wilderness who were witnesses of miracle upon miracle, serves to demonstrate to us that, however the understanding may be convinced, if the heart be not touched, there never is confidence in God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is "an evil heart of unbelief" which leads to departure "from the living God." God can call heaven and earth to witness that He has left nothing undone to reclaim man; of this Israel's history is the convincing proof. "Hear ye, o mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel. O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." Mic. 6:2-5.

The Scriptures are commended by the most substantial and convincing proofs of their divine authority to the understanding of men, yet it is very questionable whether an instance can be found of one who has been brought to peace with God by the evidences of Christianity. The mind may be satisfied with conviction arising from such evidences, but it is still culpably ignorant of God as a being to be loved and confided in. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth

walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life

of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Eph. 4:17, 18.

The heart needs to be touched and the conscience reached, as well as the understanding informed, before a person will confide in God. When many "believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did... Jesus did not commit Himself unto them." John 2:23, 24. The conviction arising from miracles would be as transient as it had been in the days of old. "The waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert." Psalm 106:11-14.

The Lord knew that it was not confidence in Him, but confidence in their present convictions, which might speedily pass away, and therefore, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them." But when Nicodemus, one of character and pretensions, came to Him on this ground, He confounds him by presenting to him the fundamental doctrine which resulted from His knowledge of what was in man.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews."

Nicodemus may be regarded by us as a specimen man. He was not an ordinary person, but a religious leader, for so we understand "a ruler of the Jews." He was, moreover, of the orthodox sect of the Pharisees, holding many important truths in theory, which were denied by the Sadducees, or modernists, although the Pharisees practically denied the truths they held by overlaying them with tradition. He came to Jesus at least with respect and as an inquirer, although, from fear of his co-religionists, he came by night. He addressed Jesus not in the contemptuous language used ordinarily by the Pharisees toward Him, but by the conventional title usually given to accredited religious teachers - "Rabbi."

All this was fair and promising, but he goes much beyond this; he acknowledges Jesus to be "a teacher come from God." This acknowledgment set Jesus above the ordinary teachers, and was in itself most emphatically true, for Jesus is the Prophet of whom Moses wrote, whose teaching had this solemn sanction: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." Deut. 18:19.

Nicodemus did not at the moment recognize the spiritual glory of Jesus as one who had come forth from the Father and had come into the world (John 16:25). He accredited the mission of Jesus as divine, because he saw the miracles Jesus did. "No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." But this acknowledgment would place Jesus no higher than Elijah or Elisha, whose mission was attested by extraordinary miracles. The Lord, therefore, tests this acknowledgment of Him as a teacher by presenting to Nicodemus an elementary doctrine, which, although at first received upon His authority as a teacher, would gather abundant proof from those scriptures of which Nicodemus himself was an accredited teacher. (The word rendered "master" in verse 10 is the same as that rendered "teacher" in verse 2.) "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus was stumbled at this authoritative announcement. But the Lord Jesus demands

to be heard on His own authority - "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Such an authority a man of the Pharisees is not prepared to recognize, unless the doctrine propounded corroborates the doctrines which he has already received on the authority of tradition. But this is not to own the authority of the Teacher come from God. Men readily recognize traditional doctrines, and support them, too, on the authority of Jesus, when they are capable of such support, but they equally insist on them to resist the authority of Jesus when His word is brought against them, making the Word of God of none effect through their tradition. Today there are many doctrines received on the authority of the so-called Church, which nullify the plainest teaching of the Lord and His apostles. So the complaint of Jesus of the men of the Pharisees of His day is equally applicable to men of a like stamp of our own day - "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not." John 8:45.

The first step of emancipation from Pharasaism is acknowledging the authority of Jesus as a teacher, however unsupported His teaching may be by traditional authority. Such authority was demanded of Jesus by the Pharisees - "By what authority doest Thou these things?" And Jesus, by referring them for an answer to the authority of the baptism of John, plainly showed that He refused all human credentials, and demanded to be received on the authority of God alone. Nothing is more difficult than to act on the authority of God, unsupported by human credentials; such acting is the acting of faith. "Have faith in God." It appeals to the conscience of men, and wherever it is recognized, it carries with it far greater weight than the authority which is backed by every attestation which man can give to it. Jesus taught as one "having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29), and it is a turning point when one acknowledges Jesus as the authoritative teacher and receives His Word on His own authority.

This prepares the way for the second great act of emancipation from Pharasaism. A man of the Pharisees does not see, with all his pretensions, a present power of deliverance and a present blessing. His religion has attainment in view, always sought but never possessed. This draws an essential distinction between a man of the Pharisees and a Christian. A Christian is and has what the other is seeking to be and to have. A Christian receives every blessing in the way of a gift; a Pharisee is seeking it under some form or other in the way of doing. A Christian by faith, enters into present salvation; a Pharisee can only eye salvation as a contingent future. It is thus the authoritative teacher announces His primary doctrine to "a man of the Pharisees" - "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and if he cannot see it, he cannot enter into it. This primary truth was announced by the Lord to a candid and well-instructed teacher of Israel, whose study and occupation was religion.

The line between a man of the Pharisees and a believer in Christ is one of essential separation. No progress in Pharasaism of the most promising kind ever approaches this line. No religion whatever which proceeds from man, or consists in ordinances, ever leads even to the threshold of the entrance into the kingdom of God. The best specimen of Pharasaism is presented to us in proof that unless God positively works by His own power, so as to communicate to man that which he could never attain, he must remain a stranger to the kingdom of God. A man must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. This is the elementary doctrine propounded by Jesus as an authoritative teacher, easily corroborated by the ancient oracles of God, as Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, ought to have known. But it is a doctrine of far more difficult reception by modern men than by ancient Pharisees, because it has been the effort of the many to set aside, supersede, or obliterate this doctrine by a system of ordinances, so that it has perhaps never been

a question of affecting the conscience of the vast majority of nominal Christians around us, whether or not they have been born again.

God grant that the essential difference between flesh and spirit, divine and human righteousness, Pharasaism and faith in Christ, may be made known not by words of human wisdom, but by the powerful demonstration of the Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." Zech. 4:6.

Man's Natural Thought Answered

Matt. 19:16-26

In the apparent dealings of the Lord Jesus, we sometimes find a degree of roughness (though, in spirit, always most blessed gentleness), and this especially when that which was amiable in human nature was brought before Him. Thus, when this young man came running to Him and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus gave the abrupt answer, "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." Again, when Nicodemus came to Him by night, desiring to learn of Him, and professing to believe He came from God (John 3), He answered, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Again, when (Jesus having foretold His suffering many things at the hands of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, at Jerusalem, and being killed, and raised again the third day) Peter, in the amiable feelings of human nature, said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee" (Matt. 16), He immediately replied, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The feelings of Peter only savored of the things of men; therefore, Jesus could only receive it as that which was ministered by Satan - "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

This young man counted on some competency in himself to do that which was good. He was very amiable, very lovable (it says, in the mention made of this same incident in Mark, "Jesus beholding him loved him"). There is much that is naturally beautiful and lovely in human nature, but there is nothing in it that tends to God - there is no will to please God in it, no righteousness in it. If such a young man had come to us asking such a question - "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" we would have considered it a most hopeful sign, but how did Jesus treat him? He just showed him that he was entirely wrong in his estimate of himself - "But if thou wilt enter into life," He said, "keep the commandments." "Which?" Jesus tests him by those which respect his conduct toward man - "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Well, says the young man, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Jesus does not deny it, but tests him further, and says, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me." "When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." Jesus had now touched that in which his heart was

concerned, and proved him to be an idolater and covetous. His riches were the treasure on which his heart was set.

If we would do that which is good, we must have a new nature. There cannot be good fruit unless the tree is good, and if we would do that which is good, we must have a good nature. But Jesus declares, "There is none good but one, that is, God." That word, Do, and live, was just brought in to prove that all are lost, to prove that none can do, and therefore it is folly to think of entering into

life thus. An innocent man would not have understood the meaning of the commandments. Thou shalt not lust, is addressed to a sinner who has the inclination to lust. "Thou shalt not steal," is addressed to a sinner who has the inclination to steal. Jesus did not come to cultivate the good of human nature, but to save the bad and the lost; therefore He tells the Pharisees, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Matt. 21:31.

"There is none good," says Jesus of human nature, but there is ONE good - GOD.

When recounting the sins of the Gentiles, the Apostle says, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Why? Because "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28). This was the root, and all the other sins were only the fruit. God does not ask for your goodness. He wants the heart, and this is what man does not like to give.

Paradise was God's being good to good people. The law was God's being righteous to bad people. But what we require is God's being good to bad people, and where shall we find this? In the gospel. You may object, This is favoring the wicked. So it is, "Let favor be showed to the wicked." Isa. 26:10. Jesus came to the lost, and this was "favor... showed to the wicked."

This is what Satan always tries to make us disbelieve, and what our proud hearts do not like to accredit. Satan said to Eve (in effect), God wants to keep one piece of fruit from a man who is innocent; He is afraid you will be gods like Himself, knowing good and evil. But what has God done? He has given not simply a certain fruit to one who is innocent, but (wondrous love!) He has given His Son for poor lost sinners. Satan always tries to tell us lies about God.

Nothing could show forth the riches of His grace like this, that He has given His own Son for poor sinners. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8. God is righteous and just. In what? In requiring goodness from us? No. In condemning us? No! He is righteous and just in forgiving our sins - in estimating the worth of His own Son's work. (Rom. 3:24, 28.)

Surely His love is immeasurable!

The Value of Meditation

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. " 1 Tim. 4:15.

We lose a considerable amount both in reading and in hearing, by not conferring with our souls about the truth we may have received and at the time felt to be applicable to us. The ant is set before us as an example of one who prepares for the winter. Now we find that God supplies us with provision for some difficult time that is coming, but instead of being like the ant when winter comes, winter comes on us "as an armed man." It is not only winter, but we have no food, and all because we have merely enjoyed ourselves during the summer. Nothing reveals this (even to ourselves, if we are really honest) so much as the contrast of our spiritual state in summer and in winter. In summer we seem to enjoy everything, we could almost imitate the lark, but when winter comes, the frost and pitiless blast supervene. All the supposed spiritual joy of the summer's day is gone, and we talk and think only of the inclemency of the air which surrounds us. This painful discrepancy, or exposure of our want, would not occur if we really had stored provisions for the exigencies to which we are exposed. The Apostle could say he had learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content. He knew how to be abased and how to abound (Phil. 4:11, 12).

I believe the soul, when it takes in any truth, ought to say, Well, some day I shall want it; let me now see how it fits me and whether I have it from God - in a word, whether I have made it as much my own as any other acquisition of which I have real possession.

Receiving and not pondering, only leaves the soul more barren in the end, simply for the reason that you lose your appreciation of anything if you find that it only charmed you, but had no place of abiding use or benefit to you. A clean animal must be also a ruminating one! Good feeding alone will not do; the chewing of the cud must follow. Meditate and find the true applicability to yourself of all you hear or learn, and what you really learn (certainly in divine things), you will never forget.

The Life of Moses

Heb. 11:23-27

Many saints cling to signs of providence as though they were to be the guide for faith. Nothing could be a more remarkable providence than that which placed Moses in the court of Pharaoh, but it was not the guide for the faith of Moses. Brought up as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty in words and in deeds, there "Providence" had placed him. If ever there was a remarkable providence, it was in the case of Moses. Having been hid three months by his parents, till they could hide him no longer, he was put in an ark of bulrushes, among the flags by the river's brink. Thus exposed, and crying, the baby attracted the attention of Pharaoh's daughter who, with her maidens, was brought down to the place just at that moment. She had compassion on him, listened to the suggestion of the young woman, his sister, placed him in the charge of his own mother to be nursed for her, and he became her son.

When Moses reached maturity, the first thing he did was to give it all up. Had he reasoned, he could have found many reasons against such a step. He might have said, God's providence has placed me here; I can use all this influence for God's people. But he never thought of such a thing. His place was with God's people. He did not act for God's people merely; he did not patronize God's people; his place was with and among them. God's providence had given him a position, which he might relinquish, but it was no guide for conscience. (There may be the most plausible reasoning about a thing but when the "eye is single," the "whole body shall be full of light.") Moses saw his brethren, though a feeble people, as "the people of God," and identified them as such, with the glory of God. This is what faith always does. They may be in a feeble and failing position, or they may be in a blessed position, but that is not the question. Faith identifies the people of God with the glory of God, and acts accordingly.

The children of Israel were in a very bad condition; still, they were "the people of God," and the first thing recorded of the faith of Moses is, that he took his place among the afflicted people of God. If reproach was on them, it was "the reproach of Christ," and he esteemed it "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." He reckoned with God, and this kept his soul clear of every other influence; he looked right on-"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Pro. 4:25. The light cannot shine down along another path.

Faith had brought Moses into a straight line with "the recompense of the reward," and, when in that path, faith enabled him to identify himself with God, to look up to God as his power. At once came the "wrath of the king." But the same faith that saw glory for him at the end of the path, saw God for him all through the path. That is the secret of real strength. What unbelief does, is to compare ourselves and our own strength with circumstances. Take the case of the spies (Num. 13 and 14). They said: "The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." If the Israelites compared their stature with that of

the Anakim, they had no business there. What did Caleb and Joshua say? They stilled the people, saying: "They are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not." That is, they compared these sons of Anak with God-what did it matter then whether they were giants or grasshoppers? They spoke the language of faith. It was no reasoning about circumstances; it was simply saying, Greater is He that is for us, than all that can be against us. God was there. That is what makes the path of faith so simple. How did David reason? He did not go and reason about the height of Goliath and about his own smallness of stature; he brought God in He said, There is an uncircumcised man, defying the armies of the living God-right, and very good reasoning!

When the glory set before us leads in the way of the promises, and we take our place with the despised and afflicted people of God, the world will not like it, and the "wrath of the king" will be the consequence. This always causes fear and trembling until God becomes clearly known to the soul as the God who is for us.

The Mystery of Godliness

In 1 Timothy the Apostle Paul would teach Timothy how he ought to behave himself "in the house of God," and he then presents the formative power of all true godliness in the words, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Tim. 3:16. This is often quoted and interpreted as if it spoke of the mystery of the Godhead, or the mystery of Christ's Person. But it is the mystery of godliness, or the secret by which all real godliness is produced - the divine spring of all that can be called piety in man. "God... manifest in the flesh" is the example and power of godliness, its measure and its spring. Godliness is not now produced, as under the law, by divine enactments, nor is it the result in the spirit of bondage in those (however godly) who only know God as worshiped behind a veil. Godliness now springs from the knowledge of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes its spring and character from the knowledge of His Person as "God... manifest in the flesh," the perfection of His obedience, as "justified in the Spirit," the object of angelic contemplation, and the subject of testimony and faith in the world, and His present position as "received up into glory." This is how God is known, and from abiding in this flows godliness.

The Name of Jesus

Some time ago some men were waiting in a public hall, and to while away the time they began to sing popular songs. Among them was a Christian who would not join in the singing of his unsaved companions. Seeing this, one man leaned over and said, "Can't you sing?" "Oh yes," said our friend,

"but only what my mother used to teach me." A shout

of laughter went around the room, and he was asked, "What is that?" "Listen," he said, and then he sang the well-known words -

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear."

A look of surprise was seen on the faces of the men, and some of them joined in the singing. The Christian with a face full of joy showed his delight in the theme - that peerless name; its sweetness was very real to him. He continued -

"It makes the wounded spirit whole,

It calms the troubled breast;

'Tis manna to the hungry soul,

And to the weary rest."

"Blest name! the rock on which we build,

Our shield and hiding-place;

Our never-failing treasury filled

With boundless stores of grace."

"Jesus! our Savior, Shepherd, Friend,

Thou Prophet, Priest, and King;

Our Lord, our Life, our Way, our End,

Accept the praise we bring."

"Weak is the effort of our heart,

And cold our warmest thought;

But when we see Thee as Thou art,
We'll praise Thee as we ought."
"Till then we would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
And triumph in Thy blessed name
Which quells the power of death."

The song finished; there was a tense silence for some moments. Then one, a professional singer, rose and stretched out his hand to the Christian, saying, "Shake hands, sir. I am not religious, but I do admire a man who has the courage of his convictions." This gave our friend a good opportunity to tell out the glad tidings of salvation. One man present who was a Christian said to the singer afterward, "How did you do it? I should have been terrified." "I do not think you would," he replied, "if you thought of the Lord Jesus, who He is and what He has done for us; you would feel as if you must speak of Him."

The Book of Nehemiah

Before entering upon this chapter, it may be helpful to the reader to point out the structure of the book. Up to chapter 7:5, we have Nehemiah's personal narrative from the time he first heard of the affliction and reproach of the remnant in Judea, and of the desolate condition of Jerusalem, until the completion of the building of the wall. The remainder of chapter 7 contains "a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first." The portion included in chapters 8 to 10 gives the reading of the law by Ezra, and the effect of it as seen in the confession of sins and in the making of a covenant to keep the law and all the observances of the house of God. This part of the book, if written by Nehemiah, is not written in the first person singular, as in the former part, but it is "we" did this or that. (See chap. 10:30,32,34, etc.)

Coming now to chapter 11, we find an account of how

the people were distributed, both in Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah, with their genealogies, followed in chapter 12:1-26 by a list of the priests that went up with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and also of the Levites who were recorded chief of the fathers at certain periods. In chapter 12:27-43 we have the dedication of the wall, and the chapter closes with the appointment of some "over the chambers for the treasures," and with an account of the duties and maintenance of the singers and porters. The last chapter (13) is taken up with a description of the abuses Nehemiah found on his return to Jerusalem after a visit to the king at Babylon, and of the vigorous efforts he made for their correction. This chapter, as well as the ceremony for the dedication of the wall, is written by Nehemiah himself, as it is an account of what he himself saw and did.

Returning again to chapter 11, the first two verses, it will be observed, are distinct - complete in themselves. "The rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem." "The city," we have before been told, "was large and great; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." Chap 7:4. In truth it was at this time little else than a desolate heap of ruins, and for the people at large, therefore, there was no means of subsistence. But as it had always been the seat of authority, and still "the holy city," the rulers, who would also be men of substance, would naturally fix their abode within its sacred walls, for, if they were men of faith, they would view it not as it actually existed before their eyes, but as it would be in a future day - as "the city of the great King" - and, as such, "the perfection of beauty," "the joy of the whole earth." Still there was need for people as well as for rulers, and thus "the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities." Besides these, there were others "that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem," and of these it is said, "the people blessed" them. Those on whom the lot fell went of necessity, but those who willingly offered themselves were moved by their own choice and affection.

This spontaneous offering of themselves could only spring from love to the place which God had desired and chosen for His habitation, and was therefore evidence that they had in some measure entered into the mind and heart of God. "They shall prosper," says the Psalmist, "that love thee" -

Jerusalem - because indeed it showed a heart in communion with the heart of God. So it was with these men who offered themselves, for it was as precious to Jehovah, although He had sent Nebuchadnezzar to level it to the ground, in the day of its desolations, as in that of its prosperity and splendor. It was as true in the time of Nehemiah as in that of Solomon, that "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling of Jacob," and hence it must have been acceptable to Jehovah Himself when these men expressed their desire to dwell at Jerusalem. The people seemed to have understood this, for they blessed those who thus came forward. If they had not the energy to do the same thing, they could not help admiring those who had, and, comprehending the privilege they would enjoy, they were constrained to bless them. They might have remembered the words of one of their own psalms - "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways.... Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Psa. 84:5-7. How often it is seen, even now, that there are believers who can admire the blessedness of devotedness to Christ and His interests without having the heart or courage to pursue the same path for themselves!

In the next place, we have a description of the distribution of the people. (See also 1 Chron. 9:2-16.) In Jerusalem there were, besides priests and Levites, children of Judah and children of Benjamin (vv. 4,10, etc.), while in the cities there were "Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants."

We may briefly glance at the details. Of Judah there were in the holy city "four hundred threescore and eight valiant men" - all "sons of Periz" or Pharez; that is, they were traced back to the son of Judah as evidence that they could show their genealogy. Of Benjamin there were nine hundred and twenty-eight. Of these, "Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah was second over the city." We find here abundant confirmation of the fact that, apart from the priests and Levites, only the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, or representatives of these, were brought back from Babylon. That there might have been individual members of other tribes - such, for example, as Anna who was of the "the tribe of Aser" (Luke 2:36) - in no wise affects this statement. As tribes, Judah and Benjamin only were restored, and thus the remaining ten tribes are "lost" to this day, hidden, in the ways of God, among the peoples of the earth. The time is fast approaching, however, though it may be not until after the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, when they will be brought out of their hiding place and set in security and blessing in their own land under the peaceful sway of their glorious Messiah. (See Jer. 29:14; 31; Eze. 20:33-44.)

Notice the care with which the genealogy of the people is stated. This, indeed, is of all importance to the saints of God, and especially to God's ancient people. For seventy years they had been in Babylon, and knowing ourselves the influence of such a scene, it would have been no wonder if they had settled down in the country to which they had been exiled, and if, in the pursuits and occupations of their daily lives, they, or at least their children born in Babylon, had forgotten the land of their birth, and ceased to remember Jerusalem above their chief joy, and had lost their nationality by mingling with the Gentiles. The record of their genealogy shows that they had not done so, that they had continued to prize their descent from Abraham as their chiefest heritage, because it had put them among a people favored of Jehovah, and in the midst of whom He Himself had dwelt. These, therefore, were not like Esau, who despised his birthright; but they

clung to it, amid all their tribulation and reproach, as their divinely given title to all their national expectations and hopes.

It is a great thing for saints at any time to preserve the record of genealogy. The Jew did it by guarding the written testimony to his descent, the Christian can only do so by walking in obedience, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, who alone can enable us to cry "Abba, Father," and who Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Moreover, the presentation of their title was a necessity (see Ezra 2:59, 62) for the admission of their claim to dwell in the holy city, and as in Ezra so here (and we would emphasize the fact) the responsibility of producing the title rested on those who made the claim. It is well to remember this in a day of profession, when all alike, on the ground of that profession, assert their rights to the most blessed privileges of Christianity, and look upon it as a proof of narrowness and lack of charity if their demands are not instantly recognized. Many such may be really the children of God, only let it be remembered that on them lies the burden of proving it, and that proving it is an indispensable condition of its acknowledgment.

From verse 10 to verse 14, we have the account of the priests, the genealogy of the chief of whom is also carefully stated. All together they numbered eleven hundred and fifty-two. Of these Seraiah was "the ruler of the house of God," while no less than eight hundred and twenty-two were occupied in the work of the house.

This was a blessed privilege, whether for the former or the latter, whatever the responsibilities connected with the respective offices which had been assigned to them in the grace of God. There are "rulers" of the house of God still, but none can rightly fill the post unless they are possessors of the necessary qualifications. (See, for example, 1 Tim. 3:1-7.) All may now assist in doing the work of the house, if they are living according to their priestly place in the holiest, for the work in this case was that which belonged to them as priest, and only those who are filling their priestly office can rightly be engaged in priestly service.

The Levites follow the priests (vv. 15-18), but altogether they only numbered two hundred fourscore and four. Among these were some who "had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God." Only the priests could minister at the altar, or in the holy places; still the Levites had a blessed place of service. They were originally given to Aaron (Christ) for the service of the tabernacle (Num. 3) for all the work of the house of God outside of the priestly office. At the present time believers are both priests and Levites, for when they are in the holiest offering through Christ the sacrifice of praise to God, or when they "do good" and "communicate" they are acting as priests (Heb. 13:15, 16), and when occupied for the Lord in other kinds of service, they exhibit rather the Levitical character.

There is indeed the same distinction in the Church of God; bishops - that is, those who answer to these as

Besides the Levites, there are mentioned "the porters.. and their brethren that kept the gates," numbering a hundred and seventy-two, and the singers of the sons of Asaph that were "over the business of the house of God." vv. 19-22. Parenthetically it is noted that "the residue of Israel, of the priests, and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance. But the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel; and Ziha and Gispa were over the Nethinim." vv. 20,21. Without going

into particulars, it may be pointed out that all these details are given to show how complete for the moment was the restoration of divine order in the holy things of Jehovah's house among these children of the captivity. Man's will had wrought long enough; now, once more back in the land of their fathers, the land of promise and hope, their one desire is that Jehovah alone should govern - that everything should be in accordance with His Word. But in the midst of this beautiful revival, there are remembrances of their sad condition in contrast with the past. Gentile authority is noticed even in connection with the house of God. Thus, after the introduction of the singers of the sons of Asaph, who were over the business of the house of God, it is added, "For it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day. And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zera the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people." vv. 23,24.

It was sad beyond all expression that the singers in the temple of the Lord should be dependent for support upon a Gentile monarch. They were Levites, and it was intended that they should be sustained by the willing-hearted contributions of the people, forasmuch as they had no part or inheritance with their brethren of the children of Israel. (See Deut. 12:11, 12; 26:12, 13.) But the people who had returned from Babylon were few in number; they themselves with their cattle were subject to the pleasure of alien rulers; they were servants in the land God had given to their fathers, and altogether were in great distress. (Chap. 9:36,37.) It was not possible for them therefore to provide for these singers, and while God in His mercy had given them some reviving in the midst of their bondage, He would have them remember that their present condition was the fruit of their past ways, and that, since it was through the chastenings of His hand that they were subject to Gentile authority, it was a part of their obedience to His will that it should be acknowledged. The sentence of Lo-Ammi had been written upon them (Hos. 1:9), though God, being what He was, could only abide faithful to the covenant which He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hence He still loved and watched over the people, for His gifts and calling are without repentance, but having, on account of their manifold transgressions, transferred His earthly sovereignty to the Gentiles, the people must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

It was the position of the people, restored by God's mercy, with the permission of the Gentile authority, and still subject, that rendered it necessary for the king to be acquainted with all the matters that concerned them, and Pethahiah was at his hand to give the required information - the representative, as it were, of his people. It is a shadow, however feeble, of Him who is at the right hand of God, gone into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us. How blessed for us to remember that there is one at the right hand of God in all matters concerning the people He has redeemed - One who has undertaken everything for us, and who is able to save us through all the difficulties and perils of the wilderness, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us.

The rest of the chapter comprises a statement of the location of the children of Judah in the different cities and villages, and also the children of Benjamin. The former dwelt from Beersheba unto the valley of Hinnom (v. 30); the latter, in the several places named, and of the Levites were divisions in Judah and in Benjamin. These notices will doubtless be consulted with intense interest by the Jews of a later day.

The Book of Nehemiah

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first, reaching down to verse 26, deals with genealogical matters; the second, extending to verse 3 of chapter 13, contains the account of the dedication of the wall, together with certain reformations that seem either to have been connected with or to have followed upon it.

The chapter commences with the names of the priests and Levites that went up with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, that is (the reader will remember), those who went up in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia. (See Ezra 1 and 2.) The names only of "the chief of the priests and of their brethren," in the days of Jeshua, are given. Next we find the chief of the Levites, with Mattaniah, who was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren; also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren who were over against them in their watches (vv.8,9).

It is worthy of note, in passing, what a prominent place praise and thanksgiving occupied in the Jewish ritual. The Psalms abundantly testify to this - many are filled with notes of adoration, and some commence and close with Hallelujah - "Praise ye the Lord." (See Psalm 148-150) The believer is enjoined in everything to give thanks, and yet it is a question whether praise (which can only be known in its full and blessed character in redemption) marks the assemblies of the saints as distinctly as it should. Not that it is to be supposed, even for a moment, that the notes of praise can be raised by any sense of obligation; they can only indeed spring from the hearts made "merry" by the enjoyment of redeeming love in the power of the Holy Ghost.

In verses 12-21 the names of the chief of the fathers (priests) in the days of Joiakim are recorded. Joiakim was the son of Jeshua (v. 10). Then in verse 22 we have the statement that "the Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian." Comparing this with verses 10 and 11, we find that this goes five generations down from Jeshua; in other words, the above names are the high-priestly line of descent to the fifth generation from Jeshua. "The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the Chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib," that is, only so far as the great-grandson of Jeshua. Then the offices of some of the Levites are specified, namely, to praise, and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David, the man of God, ward over against ward, others being "porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates." (vv. 24,25). The names of some of these correspond with some mentioned in verses 8 and 9, the reason of this being given in the next verse: "these were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe." It would seem as if God had a special delight in those who were occupied in the service of His house in this time of sorrow, when it required more faith and more spiritual energy to be devoted to the interests of His people. He has caused these names to be recorded - recorded, no doubt, mainly for Israel, yet containing lessons for us whose lot is cast in similar times. True that there was failure, very sad failure, with some here named, but in the eye of God, while He is never insensible to the failure of His people, they were robed with the beauty which He in His own grace had put upon them; in the preservation of their names, He would remember nothing but the fact of their service amidst His people in this sorrowful period of their low estate.

Passing now to the second part of the chapter, we have the dedication of the wall. From the place it occupies, it will at once be seen that the subjects of the latter part of the book are given in their

moral rather than in their historical connection. It has already been pointed out that from chapter 7 on to chapter 12:31, Nehemiah, if he is the writer, no longer describes his own actions. In this portion it is "we" or "they," not "I." It might seem therefore that the dedication of the wall belongs historically to the first section of the book - to chapter 6, wherein we find the account of the completion of the building of the wall. But when the order of the intervening chapters is considered - the restoration of the authority of the law, the confession of the sins of the people, and of their fathers, the covenant made to walk according to the law, and to make provision for the services of the temple, etc., the distribution of the people in Jerusalem and around, the ordering of all the affairs of the house of God under priests and Levites, according to the commandment of David the man of God - it will be perceived that morally it is inserted in its only fitting place. Taking all these things together, indeed, we have the pattern of all divine reformation. The commencement was made with the people themselves; then they proceeded to God's house, and finally to the walls of the city. They worked from within to without; thus, beginning from themselves, they worked outward to the circumference of their responsibility. And such is ever the true method, even as Paul writes: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Rom. 12:2. We shall find this order also illustrated in the procedure connected with the dedication itself.

First of all, the Levites were sought "out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps." The "sons of the singer" were also collected from their different places of abode (for they "had builded them villages round about Jerusalem") to aid in the observances of this eventful day (vv. 27-29). Next we read, "And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall." v. 30. Here again is the order (and it is most instructive) to which reference has been made. We may also learn that unless we have "purified" ourselves, it is vain for us to attempt to "purify" others. This truth is everywhere affirmed in Scripture. For example, it would be impossible for any whose own feet were not washed (John 13) to wash the feet of their fellow believers, and the Lord Himself taught that before we can take the mote out of our brother's eye, the beam must be taken out of our own eye. It is exceedingly interesting therefore to observe that the priests and Levites purified themselves as a necessary preparation for purifying the people, the gates, and the wall. (See also 2 Chron. 29:5; 35:6.)

The means of purification must be gathered from other scriptures. In the wilderness the priests had to wash their hands and feet at the laver every time they went in to accomplish their service (Exod. 30:17-21), and in the ashes of the red heifer, provision was made for all kinds of defilement that might be contracted in their daily life and walk by the people (Num. 19). Now, as already indicated, a provision of another and more efficacious sort has been made. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. When therefore, through carelessness, or through the allowance of the flesh, we fall into sin and become defiled, He in His love and mercy intercedes with the Father for us on the ground of what He is as the Righteous One, and of His perfect propitiation. In answer to His advocacy the Spirit of God works, through the Word, in the conscience of the defiled believer, produces self-judgment and contrition, and leads to confession, whereon God is faithful and just to forgive the sin and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. Thus the believer is "purified," restored to communion, and so divinely qualified to be sent forth in service to others. It cannot be too earnestly pressed, that in order to be used in

any way we must ourselves be "purified" from defilements.

This then was the first thing attended to on this day of the dedication of the wall. In the next place, two companies were arranged by Nehemiah (the reader will notice his reappearance) to make, as it would seem, the circuit of the walls. The first was composed of Hoshaiiah, half the princes of Judah, together with certain whose names are given (vv. 32-34), and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets. Of the last, Zechariah (whose descent is traced back to Asaph) was the chief, for he and his brethren had charge of the "musical instruments of David the man of God." (See 1 Chron. 15:16, 17; 25:6.) Ezra, the scribe, was the leader of this company; he was "before them." The composition of the other company is not given with such detail. Nehemiah says: "The other company of them that gave thanks went over against them [that is, we judge, on the opposite wall to the other company], and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall." And then, after describing the line of the procession, he says, "They stood still in the prison gate." It appears as if the two companies, starting at different points, proceeded to make the circuit of the walls until they met, as Nehemiah, after giving the route of each of the companies, says: "So stood the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: and the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah," etc., "with trumpets." vv. 40-42. If this were so, the service of the day took place after the procession was ended, as the statement follows: "And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." vv. 42,43.

Examining a little the details given, there were, we find, those who gave thanks, those who had trumpets, and those who sang; besides this, sacrifices were

Observe that there were trumpets (vv. 35,41). These were carried by the priests, for they alone, as those who had access into the presence of God, and might be thus

in communion with His mind, had the privilege of raising the notes of testimony through the sacred trumpets (Num. 10). This day of dedication was for God, but whenever the claims of God are responded to in the energy of the Holy Spirit, testimony for Him also proceeds from His people. For example, when the saints gather together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20), it is in response to His desire who said, "This do in remembrance of Me. " It is for Him therefore they gather, for Him, without a thought of others. And yet as often as they eat the bread and drink the cup, they announce the Lord's death "till He come"; that is, though they gather in remembrance of the Lord, and, while thus occupied, their hearts are led forth in thanksgiving and adoration, they yet, by the very thing in which they are engaged, proclaim to all the Lord's death. The trumpets are in this way associated with their notes of praise. There were also musical instruments and singing. The singers indeed "sang loud," or, as it is in the margin, made their voices to be heard.

They thus, by the musical instruments and their songs, expressed their joy before the Lord. The character of this is given in the next verse in connection with the sacrifices, for they remembered again on this festival that the only ground on which they could stand before God even though it was to thank and praise His holy name, was the efficacy of the sacrifice. Joy could therefore flow out, and it was joy of no ordinary kind, for "God had made them rejoice with great joy." Nothing could be more blessed. Our poor hearts long for joy, and are ever tempted to seek it from human

sources, only to find that it is both unsatisfying and evanescent. Hence the Apostle writes: "Be not drunk with wine" (type of the joys of earth), "wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Eph. 5:18, 19. Such was the joy of the children of Israel on this day, for it has its source in God, and He it was who had filled their hearts with thanksgiving and their lips with praise. They had, we might say, sown in tears, and now they were reaping with joy.

Notice also that all classes of the people participated in it. It is expressly said, "The wives also and the children rejoiced." This was precious to the heart of God, for the wives and children were numbered among His people (compare Eph. 5 and 6), and why should they be excluded from the gladness of this day? They had been assembled also with the congregation at the reading of the law (chap. 8), and indeed it is a characteristic both of this book and Ezra (see chap. 10), that the women and children were present in all the great assemblies of the people. The effect of their rejoicing was great, for we read that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." v. 43. It went forth into the midst of their enemies as a mighty testimony to Him by whose grace they had been rescued from Babylon, and by whose protection and succor they had now been permitted to re-erect the walls of the holy city. They were proving anew that the joy of the Lord was their strength, both for praise and for testimony. And it is added that "Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited" [or stood] in their places of service in the temple. It was joy to Judah to behold the services of the house of God restored, and the priests and Levites engaged in the work of their office.

In connection with the ceremonies of the dedication, some necessary things were attended to in the house of God; it says, "At that time" - not perhaps on the same day, but "at that time" - the time following upon the dedication of the wall. What they did was to appoint some "over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited." v. 44. There was evidently a continual tendency to neglect the concerns of the house of God, and together with this the priests and the Levites were overlooked. It was so on the first return of the captives (Hag. 1), and it was so in every time of declension, as it has been also in every age of the Church. Ceasing to care for the house of Jehovah, the maintenance of the priests and Levites enjoined by the law was not forthcoming, for all were minding their own things, and not the things of the Lord. But when their hearts were touched by the goodness of God in permitting them to complete the wall, they at once remembered the ministers of their God, and again (see chap. 10:37-39) made provision for them. This is how God works in the low estate of His people. Granting them a revival, it may be under the power of some special truth, they, acted upon by the new impulse they have thus received, proceed to correct by the application of the Word the abuses that have sprung up on every hand. So it was in this case, and hence we find that the singers and the porters were also arranged, who "kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God." vv. 45,46. They recall how it was in the beginning of the temple services, and their desire now was to be conformed to the original model. This is an abiding principle, for it is only by testing everything by what was at the beginning that we can discover the extent of our departure, and it is only by going back to it that we can be in

harmony with the mind of God.

Moreover, we read: "And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified holy things unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron." This can hardly be more than a general statement (see chaps. 10:37-39; 13:10) to the effect that there were times, during the periods named, when all Israel owned and met their obligations to these servants of the house of their God. Their failure is not here recorded; that has to be gleaned from the other parts of the book. Here it is only remembered that all Israel had cared for God's ministers of His sanctuary.

Last, we are told that "on that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people," and that when they found therein that "the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever," etc. (Deut. 23:3, 4), "they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude." (Chap. 13:1-3.) Again and again they had thus separated themselves (Ezra 10; Neh. 9:2, etc.), and again and again did "the holy seed" mingle "themselves with the people of those lands." In truth, then as now, alliance with the world was the most successful snare of Satan; hence there has ever been need for vigilance and for the enforcement of the truth of separation unto God. But there is a special reason for the introduction of this subject in this connection. The meaning of the wall, as pointed out more than once, is exclusion of evil, separation of God's people from other nations (for us, from the world - from evil, whether in the world or in the Church), and thus to be set apart to God. When we read, therefore, of Israel's purging themselves from the mixed multitude, we see that they were simply maintaining the truth of the wall, that, together with its dedication, they felt themselves bound to carry out into practice all that its completion signified. The reader will not fail to perceive the force of the term "the mixed multitude." It was the mixed multitude that "fell a lusting" in the wilderness, and so became a hindrance and a curse to Israel, and ever since that day, whether in Israel or in the Church, they have been the source of almost all the evils that have afflicted the saints. It is among the mixed multitude that Satan ever finds ready instruments to his hands wherewith he may disturb, harass, and ensnare God's people. The only pathway of safety is to follow the example of Israel before us in separating from it.

The Book of Nehemiah

It is impossible now to determine the chronological place of the occurrences of this chapter. We are told only that "before this" Eliashib was allied unto Tobiah, and had been on great terms of intimacy with him, and that during this time Nehemiah was not at Jerusalem (v. 6). "Before this" would mean before the separation from the mixed multitude (v. 3), and hence the probability is that the dedication of the wall had been delayed through the absence of the governor, and that, if this were so, the events described here took place prior to the services in connection with the dedication of the wall. This however is of no consequence, for, as before intimated, what we have to seek is the moral and not the historical order. Interpreting the connection thus, there is no difficulty, for what was the object of Nehemiah's mission to Jerusalem? It was to build the walls of the holy city (chapters 3 and 6), and by the good hand of God upon him he was enabled to complete the work to which he had been called. The wall had been erected and he and the people had celebrated the event with great joy, and under the influence of that day they had set the house of God in order, and recognized that they were a people set apart to Jehovah.

And what was the next thing? FAILURE - failure in everything which they had undertaken to do, and to which they had bound themselves, under the penalty of a curse, by a solemn covenant. (See chap. 10.) The lesson of Nehemiah's mission is therefore the lesson of every dispensation, namely, that whatever God entrusts to man under responsibility ends in failure. In fact there is more than this, for we learn that failure is brought in by man at the very moment of God's grace in blessing. It is not only that each successive dispensation ends, but it also begins with failure. Adam, for example, disobeyed as soon as he was set in the place of headship and blessing; Noah, in like manner, sinned as soon as he could gather the fruit of his first vineyard upon the new earth; Israel apostatized before even the tables of the law reached the camp, and David incurred blood-guiltiness soon after the establishment of the kingdom. Nor is it otherwise in the history of the Church. In the end of Acts 4 we see the perfect answer to the Lord's prayer, "that they all may be one" (John 17:21), for "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (v. 32); then in chapter 5 we have the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, and in chapter 6, the murmuring of one class of disciples against another. So it is also with the mission of individuals. As an instance, take the case of the Apostle Paul. Long before he had finished his course, he saw the outward failure of the Church, and "all they which are in Asia" had "turned away" from him (2 Tim. 1:15).

These examples will explain the significant moral order of Nehemiah's narrative. Scarcely had the echoes of Jerusalem's joy, in being surrounded once more by her wall of separation (chap. 12:43), died away, before all the evils which had hitherto afflicted the people, and which had been the cause of their long years of banishment, reappeared. And the book closes with the account of Nehemiah's conflict with the transgressors in Israel, and of his strenuous efforts to maintain the supremacy of Jehovah in the holy city.

The first thing mentioned is the sin of Eliashib. Eliashib was the grandson of Jeshua, who had returned with Zerubbabel. He filled the office of the priest, had "the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God," was allied unto Tobiah the Ammonite, and had even "prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil" - the portion for the Levites, etc. - and this chamber was "in the courts of the house of God." vv. 4-7. This was corruption in the head and representative of the people before God, and, with such an example, what wonder if the people followed in his guilty steps? It is a terrible instance of the hardening effect of familiarity with sacred things when the heart is not upright before God. Eliashib was constantly engaged in the work of his high-priestly office in the holy places, and yet had become blunted and indifferent to the character of the God before whom he appeared, as well as to the holiness of His house. His office in his eyes was an office and nothing more, and hence he used it for his own purposes and for the assistance of his friends, a pattern that has been unhappily and frequently reproduced even in the Church of God.

All this time Nehemiah, as he informs us, was not at Jerusalem. He had paid a visit to the king (v. 6), but, on his return, was made acquainted with the evil Eliashib had perpetrated in connection with Tobiah. And he says, "It grieved me sore." v. 8. There are those who can understand the grief of this devoted man. It was a grief according to God, for it sprang from a sense of the dishonor done to the Lord's name. It was akin to that of Jeremiah when he cried, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the

daughter of my people!" or again to that of the Apostle when he poured forth his earnest admonitions, entreaties, and remonstrances to his Galatian converts. Would that there were more filled with like zeal for the house of God! Nor was it grief only that Nehemiah felt, but it was grief that led him to purge this chamber of the temple from its pollutions. He cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah, and says, "then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense." v. 9. He thus restored the chamber, having purified it, to its proper use.

In connection with this, another discovery was made. "I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field." v. 10. Together with the admission of the enemy into the holy places of the temple, the ministers of God had been neglected. The Levites and singers had been wholly set apart for the sacred services of the house, and the burden of their maintenance, by divine appointment, fell upon, and had been acknowledged by, the people. But as soon as they lost, through the influence of Eliashib, all sense of the holiness of the house, they forgot their responsibilities, and the servants of the Lord in His house were compelled to have recourse to the ordinary means of support - they "fled every man to his field." The same thing is often seen in the Church. In seasons of devotedness, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, there are those who will give up all for the work of proclaiming the gospel or ministering of the Word, and when the saints are walking with God they will welcome such, and have fellowship with them, rejoicing that the Lord is sending forth more laborers into His harvest, and to care for the souls of His people. But whenever decline sets in, and saints become worldly, laborers are forgotten, so that those who have not learned the lesson of dependence on God alone, that He is all-sufficient for their needs, are compelled to flee to their fields for support.

This difference, however, must be marked. There is no obligation now, as there was with the Jew, to support the Levites, but it is a privilege to do so. And whenever it is done as unto the Lord, the things offered, as they were to Paul, are "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Phil. 4:18. Nehemiah proceeded at once to rectify also this abuse. He contended with the rulers, and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then he gathered the Levites and singers together and once more set them in their place. He thus went down to the root of the evil - forsaking the house of God (compare Heb. 10:25) - and at the same time dealt with those (the rulers) who were responsible for the neglect, for, if they were careless, the people would soon imitate their example. In fact it was the cropping up of the evil that has afflicted the people of God in every age - minding their own things instead of being occupied with the Lord, His interests and claims.

The influence of the energetic action of Nehemiah was instantly felt, for we read, "Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil into the treasuries." v. 12. The people had a heart, and their affections toward the house of God and His servants were ready to flow out as soon as Nehemiah led the way. It is another instance that the outward state of the people of God depends almost wholly upon the character of their leaders. If these are earnest and devoted, so will the people be also, while if those who take the lead are careless and worldly, these characteristics will also be displayed by the people. It is so now in different assemblies. Whatever those are who have places of prominence, so are the saints corporately. The leaders impress their own character upon the meeting. There may be individuals in the assembly of entirely another

sort, but we speak of meetings as a whole. All this only shows out the solemn responsibility resting upon "the rulers," and will explain, at the same time, the character of the addresses to the angels of the seven churches, for the angels are only the collective responsibility, whether in one, two, or more, of the several assemblies; and hence their state is the state of all, and they are dealt with as responsible for it.

To provide against the recurrence of the evil, Nehemiah "made treasurers over the treasuries" (v. 13), the ground of his selection being that "they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren." Upright himself before God, he was uninfluenced by any personal considerations; and, governed by the single eye, he had respect only to suitability to the post. Fidelity was the thing needed, as the office was one of trust, requiring faithfulness toward God and also toward their brethren; hence he sought only such as possessed the necessary qualification. The very composition, moreover, of the treasurers - a priest, a scribe, a Levite, and another - shows how careful he also was in "providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." 2 Cor. 8:21.

This accomplished, Nehemiah turns to God with the prayer, "Remember me, O my God concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof." v. 14. It has often been pointed out that Nehemiah in his prayers was too much occupied with himself and his own good deeds. We do not say that it might not have been so, but they are capable of another interpretation. He was almost alone in the midst of prevailing corruption, and it was only in God that he found his strength and encouragement; thus, in the midst of all his difficulties, we find continually these ejaculatory petitions. At any rate, it is clear that he looked for no recompense from man, and that he was content to leave himself and the recognition of his doings in the hands of God, assured, as he was, that it was God's work in which he was engaged, and counting upon Him alone for the recompense.

Forsaking the house of God was not the only evil Nehemiah had to contend with. The next was the violation of the sabbath. "In those days," he says, "saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day," etc. v. 15. They were also selling victuals, and bought fish and ware of the men of Tiro on the sabbath (v. 16). Having lost all sense of the claims of God as to His house, it was but a natural consequence that they should also neglect the sanctity of the seventh day, the observance of which, from redemption out of Egypt (Ex. 16; Deut. 5:14, 15) and onward, had been enjoined by God in connection with every covenant into which He had been pleased to enter with His people Israel. The profanation therefore of the sabbath was the sign that they had gone far in back-sliding, that indeed they were verging upon apostasy, for they were sinning, in this respect, against both light and knowledge. Nehemiah, in his zeal for the Lord, was aroused, and he "contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath." vv. 17, 18.

It will be observed that as the rulers were in question in regard to forsaking the house of God, so the nobles are the head and front of the offense in respect of the sabbath. In both cases the fount of the evil was in those who ought to have been examples to the people. It is ever so in times of

general declension, inasmuch as it is only the leaders who can draw the mass after them into sin. But this very fact rendered the task of Nehemiah all the more arduous. Singlehanded he had to contend with those on whom he had a right to count to sustain his authority and influence. Truly he was a faithful man, and because he was such God was with him in his conflict with the transgressors in Israel. Having convicted them that had sinned before all (see 1 Tim. 5:20), he used his authority as governor to prevent a recurrence of the evil. First, he commanded that the

gates of Jerusalem should be shut before dark on the eve of the sabbath, and that they should be kept closed until the sabbath was over. It shows how few were to be depended upon for this service, in that he stationed some of his own servants at the gates to see to it, that "there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day." v. 19. In addition, he gave his own unremitting attention to the matter, and thus when the Tyrian merchants and vendors lodged without Jerusalem once or twice- their very presence being a temptation to the people he testified against them and threatened to lay hands on them, and in this way they were driven off.

Finally, Nehemiah "commanded the Levites, that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day." v. 22. It is a beautiful picture of one devoted man seeking with all his might to stem the rushing tide of evil. To human eyes it might seem a hopeless struggle, and even, as to outward results, a failure. But it was God's battle that Nehemiah was fighting, and he knew it; and if but faithful to Him there could never be defeat. God is the appraiser of the conflict, and He counts as victory what human eyes regard as disaster. (See Isa. 49:4-6.) Nehemiah had in measure learned this lesson, and thus he turns again to God with the prayer, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy." He looks not to man, but to God, and while he desires to be remembered for "this also," yet, in his true humility, conscious of all his own weakness and failure, he does but pray to be spared according to the "greatness" of God's mercy. Blessed state of soul it is when the servant is made to feel that, whatever his service, he has nothing to rest upon but the mercy of God! On that foundation - for Christ Himself is its channel and expression - he can repose, whatever his trials and conflicts, in perfect peace and security.

There was yet another trial. "In those days also," he says, "saw I Jews that 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." vv. 23,24. This was the evil that had so deeply afflicted the heart of Ezra (chap. 9:1-3), and which he earnestly sought to eradicate. It had started up again and confronted Nehemiah also all through his labors (chap. 9:2; 10:30, etc.) with its sad and open testimony to the state of the people. For what did it declare? That Israel was abandoning the ground of separation unto God, and breaking down the holy wall of enclosure - "the middle wall of partition" - by which He had shut them off from all the peoples that were upon the face of the earth. It was, in truth, no less than a denial that they were God's chosen nation- a holy people to the Lord - and it was thus a surrender of all the privileges, blessings, and hopes of their calling. It was no wonder therefore that Nehemiah was filled with such holy indignation that he "contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves." He reminded them, moreover, of the sad example of Solomon, that, though there was "no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish

women cause to sin. Shall we then," he inquired, "hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?" vv. 26,27.

It must have been indeed a bitter trial to the heart of

Nehemiah. It was the account of the great reproach and affliction of the remnant in the province, and of the wall in Jerusalem being broken down, as well as of the gates being burned with fire (chap. 1:3), that had been used to stir up the desire in his soul to remedy these evils. The desire of his heart was granted, and he had gone to Jerusalem and labored there for years, and at length, through the goodness of God, he saw his desire accomplished. But now together with the close of his labors, he has to mourn over the persistent refusals of the people to remain in holy security within the wall of separation. Having their treasure in the world, their hearts were there also, and they thus continually turned their backs upon all the blessings of the holy place in which they had been set. Still Nehemiah was undaunted, and with unwearied energy he persevered in his labors for the good of his people, seeking only, for the glory of God, to spend and be spent in their service. First, he "chased" from him one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, who was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite.

Eliashib himself, as we have seen, was "allied unto Tobiah," so that he and his family were linked up with the two active enemies of Israel. Here then, in the high priest's family, was the fount of corruption from which flowed out the dark and bitter streams of sin through the people. To drive the sinner away was all that Nehemiah himself could accomplish, but he had another resource, of which he availed himself - he committed the matter to God. "Remember them, O my God," he cries, "because they have defiled the priesthood" (Lev. 21), "and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites." (Mal. 2:4-7.)

Nehemiah nevertheless continued his work of reformation. He says, "Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits." For the moment all is ordered according to God, and in this way Nehemiah becomes a shadow, if not a distinct type, of Him who will "sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Mal. 3:3.

Thus end the recorded labors of Nehemiah. He had fully identified himself with the interests of the Lord and with Israel, and he had persevered in his labors amid opposition and reproach, and now that the close had come he is content to leave all results in the hands of God. Hence, looking away from his work and from himself, he cries, "Remember me, O my God, for good." This prayer has already been answered, for it is God who caused this account of Nehemiah's labors to be preserved, and He will answer it yet more abundantly, for the time will come when He will publicly acknowledge Nehemiah's faithful service according to His own perfect estimate of his work. For while it is true, and ever to be remembered, that grace alone produces the energy and perseverance of service in the hearts of any, it is also true that the same grace reckons the fruits of labor to those in whose hearts they have been produced. God is the source of all; He calls and qualifies His servants; He sustains and directs them in their labors, and yet He says: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." To Him alone be all the praise!

No Glass Between

The story is told of a little boy whose family was very poor. He never complained because he had no toys and received no gifts, but he wished for them. He spent what time he could looking in the store windows at the pretty things other little boys could have, but he couldn't.

One day he was run down by a car and taken to a hospital. When he started to feel better, one of the nurses brought him a toy. As he touched it he said, "There isn't any glass between."

Some day we shall see Christ our Savior face to face, with no "glass" between.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." 1 Cor. 13:12.

One Hundred Years Ago: From a Letter in 1885

Note: In the year 1885 the following letter was written from Beirut. The writer was B.F. Pinkerton from Springfield, IL. who went as a missionary to labor for the Lord in Syria, Egypt, and Palestine.

"I went on to Jerusalem, where I had access to a few souls, and left some books. From there I proceeded northward by land to Nazareth, but touched two points by the way, met with some souls, and left some books. In every place I met some who had been reading the books formerly, and were somewhat interested to see me and get some more.

"At Nazareth I remained five days, was quite happy, and saw a good many. Then northward to Tiberias where I slept one night, and after two days more reached Deir Mimas, near the foot of Mount Hermon, where I made a short visit.

"I was really encouraged by my visits the different points, and feel assured that the Lord has some souls even in the moral and natural desolations of Palestine, to whom God's Word is precious. How far and how fast they will get on is a matter we can leave to Him. It is a joy to be used, even in helping them a very little. A good many I met were schoolmasters, and were accustomed to give out to others any light they get. I sought to help them by a clear gospel.

"Here is a sample of what often takes place. In Jerusalem I was invited for the evening to a friend's house. Several came in. One of them, a schoolmaster, had been reading, and was interested to see me and ask questions. He said, 'I have been reading your exposition of Romans, and would have liked it if you had gone more fully into some of its knotty points.' I asked, 'What knotty points?' He answered, 'Oh, election, and some of its kindred subjects which are so difficult and are the strong meat which only those who are of full age can take in.' I then said, 'Why, my dear friend, election is not among the advanced truths of scripture at all. We cannot call it strong meat. It is really ABC truth in scripture. For such is the state of fallen man, that when God wants a people, He has to choose and call them.' He said, 'Oh, but chapter 9 is very, very difficult.' I said, 'But, my friend, may not the difficulty be with you? Perhaps you have not yet mastered chapters 1, 2, and 3. You are a schoolmaster. Suppose a pupil would come to you complaining of the exceeding difficulties of the rules of fractions, and you found that he had not yet mastered addition, multiplication, and division, and subtraction: what would you do with him? Why, of course, you would take him back to the first rules of arithmetic. Now, so it is with divine truth. You must first learn what man is in Romans 1 and 2, and then what God has done in grace in chapter 3. After that you may go on step by step, and when you reach chapter 9, you will have no difficulty.'

"This was the opening of the evening's conversation. So the way being thus opened, we looked into the truths of Romans as to what man is, and what man has done; others were present listening, and some of them were asking questions or stating objections. This is a sample of how we get access to souls. Some get stirred up and desire to have a book to read. This is selected for them and freely and cheerfully given. In some instances they are promised some special book or tract not at hand but which will be sent by first opportunity.

"Again, I am walking over to Bethany, and have a guide. 'Well, Sergius, what are you?' He answers, 'A Christian of the Copt religion.' I say, 'Well, where would you go if you were to die today?' The old answer, 'If my works are good, to heaven; otherwise not.' Then the remainder of our time as we walked over Olivet and Bethany was mostly taken up with these important questions. He cannot read Arabic, but his aged father is a Coptic priest resident in the Holy Land. He is a great reader and is delighted to look into Christian books. 'Now, Sergius, you kindly take this parcel of books to your father and give him my Christian love, and I am sure he will be interested to read what I give you.' He was not in Jerusalem or I should have called on him and made his acquaintance.

"Now I must not omit to tell you of the last night of my journey. I spent it in the quiet of a Jewish family in Sidon. The brethren in Deir Mimas have been for some time interested in some Jews in Sidon with whom they have had much conversation about Israel's calling and hopes, and what Christianity is, etc. They told me these Jewish friends were anxious to see me and that I might spend the night with them on my way. One of the brethren came with me a day's journey on foot (I was riding), to introduce me to them, and make arrangements for me to spend a night with them.

"I was interested in them. They had been deeply affected by the spirit they witnessed in the brethren in Deir Mimas, and were quite willing to listen. We went over God's calling of Israel and His ways past and future with them. We had Isaiah 8, and Daniel 9, and a good many other scriptures which relate to Christ's birth, rejection, and death; also His present place in heaven and what Christianity is as well as the rapture and what follows. Altogether it was a profitable evening with no controversy. They quite freely communicated to me their thoughts and expectations which are, of course, Jewish. They are of Aaron's family. The old man is a merchant and has traveled much in Russia and elsewhere and knows the state of the Jews. One of his sons has a good deal of discernment and grace may yet call him.

"They say that there are now about 80,000 Jews in Palestine and Syria; 12,000 in Jaffa, about 30,000 in Jerusalem, 7,000 in Hebron, 7,000 in Tiberias, and 12,000 in Jafed. Other authorities put the number of Jews in Jerusalem at about 20,000. All agree that they now form two-thirds of the inhabitants. Of the remaining third, one-half are foreigners. All the activity there now is on the part of foreigners. It is religiously a city of 'stirs and activity,' and is getting ready for its part in coming events, just as fast as London or Paris or Rome is getting ready." [For contrast we give these 1985 statistics: Pop. est. Israel 3,958,000; Jerusalem 398,000; religion 83% Jew.]

"I have long been impressed by the winepress of God's wrath in which the vine of the earth is cast to be trodden outside that city. (Rev. 14:17-20.) It differs from the harvest of the earth mentioned before and seems to be more definite and specific and more severe. I have long thought that man's religion, in its various forms and types (apart from open heathenism), will eventually be found centered in Jerusalem and Palestine, and that God will in due time execute special judgment on it. In what form I do not undertake to say, but it will be terrible.

"Oh, how solemn to think that all these events are just at the door. Men, in their blindness, see not. How much grace we need just now to go on in grace, having confidence in God's Word which is the only thing that abides.

"Since last writing to you, I have fresh word from Mesopotamia. From all I gather, there has been some blessing to souls there through the truth. Some six new correspondents addressed a letter to me which I received just before my last journey. Word from Upper Egypt is still good. May the Lord in mercy keep them fresh in a sense of His love and grace. If we do not drink in peace and communion from the living streams of grace, 'living waters' will not flow from us to refresh others. We shall only be clouds without water carried about by winds of strife.

"The temptation seems to me to be strong now to get us away from simple grace. Any who have been favored with increased light dare not give it up for God has given it to them, but, oh, how much all need His help to maintain it in communion."

Paul's Ministry

It is true as well as surprising to many to know that in Paul's ministry we have the completion of the Word of God (Col. 1:25). All the counsels of God which center in His beloved Son have been revealed for our spiritual intelligence. There are five scriptures which show distinctly that Paul's ministry was by special revelation: Gal. 1:12 Thess. 4:15; Eph. 3:3 Cor. 11:23 and 15:51. In them we have the gospel of the grace of God, the rapture, the mystery, the supper, and the resurrection from among the dead, all declaring the new position and portion of believers on this side of the cross, which are heavenly.

Peace

In John 20:19-21 we have the word "peace" in a twofold sense, first, as applied to the inner life, and second, to the outer life of the Christian disciple. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side."

Here we have peace in its blessed application to the inner life. All was finished. The battle was fought, the victory gained. The Conqueror was in their midst - the true David with the head of the Philistine in His hand. All possible ground of anxiety was forever removed. Peace was made, and established on a basis which could never be moved. It was utterly impossible that any power of earth or hell could ever touch the foundation of that peace which a risen Savior was now breathing into the souls of His gathered disciples. He had made peace by the blood of His cross. He had met every foe. He had encountered the marshaled hosts of hell and made a show of them openly. The full tide of Jehovah's righteous wrath against sin had rolled over Him. He had taken the sting from death, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, the triumph was gloriously complete, and the blessed Victim at once presents Himself to the eyes and to the hearts of His beloved people, and sounds in their ears the precious word, "peace."

And then notice the significant action. "He showed unto them His hands and His side." He brings them into immediate contact with Himself. He reveals His Person to their souls, and shows them the unequivocal tokens of His cross and passion - the wondrous marks of accomplished atonement. He is a risen Savior, bearing in His body the marks of that death through which He had passed for His people.

This is the secret of peace. It is a great deal more than knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we are justified from all things, blessed as all this assuredly is. It is having before our souls - before the eye of faith - the Person of a risen Christ and receiving from His own lips the sweet message of "peace." It is having in our hearts that holy sense of deliverance which springs from having the Person of the Deliverer distinctly presented to our faith. It is not merely that we know we are forgiven and delivered, but our hearts are livingly engaged with the One who has done it all, and we gaze by faith upon the marks of His accomplished work. This is peace for the inner life.

But this is not all. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Here we have the outer side of the Christian. It is all, from first to last, wrapped up in this one grand fact: he is sent into the world, as Jesus was sent by the Father. It is not a question of what he has to do or where he has to go. He is one sent by Jesus, even as Jesus was sent by the Father, and before he starts on this high and holy mission, his risen Lord insures him with perfect peace as to every scene and circumstance of his whole career.

What a mission! What a view of the life of a Christian! Do we at all enter into it? Let no one suppose for a moment that all this applies only to apostles. This would be a great mistake. The passage on which we are dwelling does not speak of apostles. It speaks of "disciples," a term which surely applies to all the children of God. The very feeblest disciple is privileged to know himself as one sent into this world, as Jesus was sent of the Father. What a model to study! What a place it gives us! What an object to live for! How it settles everything! It is not a question of "view" - of opinions, dogmas, or principles - of ordinances or ceremonies. No, thank God, it is something quite different. It is life and peace - life in a risen Savior, and peace for that life, both inward and outward. It is sitting at the feet of a risen Savior, and then going forth to serve Him in this world, as He served the Father.

Popular Opinion

Popular opinion is one of the two things that control the natural man. Man's own lust is the other. In the Epistle of James he clearly tells us of lust and its result in the very first chapter. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Popular opinion controlled Herod when, because of those who sat eating with him, he commanded John the Baptist to be beheaded. Pilate also, even after saying three times, "I find no fault in this Man," still delivered Jesus to be crucified because of public opinion.

Sometimes popular opinion is a restraining factor to prevent evil. Thieves do not want the public to know what they are doing because they know it is wrong. As the moral standards decline, this partial hindrance to evil declines also. This is so very evident in the last two or more decades. General moral standards are lower and lower every year. What was considered wrong and even repulsive a few years ago is first casually accepted and then taught.

To Christians the exhortation is, let not fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness be once named among you. This is God's standard. It never changes. As to the unfruitful works of darkness in the world, the word is: "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." Eph. 5:12.

As popular opinion gets lower it is less and less of a hindrance to evil. As Zephaniah, the prophet, wrote:

"The unjust knoweth no shame." Zeph. 3:5. What men formerly blushed at is now laughed at. What was formerly done in secret is now done openly. Next it is taught and commercialized for filthy lucre. In the world, lewdness and immorality are accepted as the natural course. Popular opinion has lowered and the general standard of conduct is down accordingly.

Is it necessary to ask what the Christian's conduct should be or even what his attitude toward these things should be? The Word of God is clear. "Keep thyself pure." 1 Tim. 5:22. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." 1 Pet. 1:16. We are called to "glory and virtue." 2 Pet. 1:3.

Defiling influences are found in schools, colleges, offices, factories and even in houses of the world. How very important it is for the Christian to seek to walk with God. Enoch did this in the wicked world of his day and he was not found for God took him. This is our hope also, yet while we are still here in the world may we not be of it. (John 17:14.)

If we often read the Holy Scriptures so that our thoughts are formed by the precious Word of God, our standard will be God's standard and not that declining standard of men.

Power With God

It has been asked, How did Jacob prevail over God? (Gen. 32:24-28.) It was by earnest weeping and supplication. God in mercy suffered Himself to be prevailed over, thus showing His acceptance of Jacob's strong crying and tears. When the wrestling had reduced Jacob to the sense of powerlessness in himself, he clung to the angel in his weakness, and God suffered him thus to prevail over Him.

This scene is referred to in Hos. 12:4 -"Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him." Jacob's history is that of a saint who did not walk with God, yet as a saint, he valued the promises of God and sought to enjoy them by human, means which were not upright. We need faith for the means as well as for the end which God has in view. Jacob halted morally for twenty one years, then the moment came when God brought His controversy to an issue with him. His dividing of the flocks and his present for Esau showed that he had no real faith in God's care, though he prayed earnestly enough at the same time. He was a froward man, and we read, "With the froward Thou wilt wrestle." (Psalm 18:26;•margin). God met Jacob alone and wrestled with him to bring him to the sense of weakness and nothingness, but does not prevail. At last He touched the hollow of his thigh, and it was dislocated. Reduced to the extremity of weakness and powerlessness, yet he clung to the angel, conscious of who was there, and with weeping and earnest entreaty he sought a blessing from Him whose strength is "made perfect in weakness," and he prevailed. He was blessed, and for the name "Jacob" (that is, Supplanter) he received that of "Israel" (that is, a prince with God) who had power with God and prevailed. God answered with His blessing, having reduced His servant to the consciousness of entire weakness and inability to do without Him. But Jacob bore the marks of the controversy and halted upon his thigh for life.

How often we see this! When God's controversy with the souls of His people is slighted, at last they are brought to a moment when all is gone but God! Then the blessing flows freely, but the mark of the discipline which was needed to reduce the soul to that point is seen for the rest of the life. Yet the day dawns and the sun rises on one who has had a deep and blessed lesson from a faithful God.

How all this puts us in mind of our perfect Lord and Savior! His weeping and supplications - "strong crying and tears" - mark the perfection of One who felt in its verity the place He had undertaken in love, yet He must go through and drink the cup, and be forsaken of God. Here was perfection perfected. If it must be so, He will have the cup from no hand but His Father's. He goes on to the cross, and "All My bones are out of joint" was His cry at that solemn moment, when God was averting His face from His Son when He was made sin for us; He bears the marks of His sufferings in glory, and forever!

This Present Evil World: List of Scriptures With World

"In time past ye walked according to the course of this world." Eph. 2:2.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [whereby] the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14.

"He was in the world... and the world knew Him not." John 1:10.

"The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." 1 John 3:1.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John 17:16.

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." John 17:15.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this... to keep himself unspotted from the world." Jas. 1:27.

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:5.

"Ye are the light of the world." Matt. 5:14.

"The sons of God... in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Phil. 2:15.

"Marvel not... if the world hate you." 1 John 3:13.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." John 15:18.

"Be not conformed to this world." Rom. 12:2. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." 1 John 2:15.

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15.

"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.

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." 1 John 2:17.

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Jas. 4:4.

"Whosoever... will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Jas. 4:4.

The Present Love of God

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ." 2 Thess. 3:5; J.N.D. Trans.

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." So runs the witness of Rom. 5:5. It is God's own love to us, not our love to Him - love that towers high above all earthly love, however great. The love of friend for friend may be wonderful, as was the love of Jonathan for David, and the love of a mother for her child is tender and unwearying, but the love of God to us - His own love - is incomparably greater and is all the more beautiful, in that there was nothing in us to call it forth. He loved us when we were sinners, and gave His Son to die for us.

We can never doubt that love as we gaze upon the cross. Love emptied itself there. It gave its all for us - for you, for me.

What an answer this is to Satan's lie in the garden of Eden! There he succeeded in persuading Eve that God withheld something that would be for her good to have. Oh, what a harvest of sorrow, tears, anguish and death, has followed that disbelief of God's love! But that love, suspected and disbelieved in Eden, has displayed itself at Calvary. How? He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. There we learn the mighty, measureless love of God.

And this perfect love casts out fear. It must do so, for how could we be afraid of One who loves with perfect love? Now God's love is perfect, and withal holy, for He has known our sins, and shown His love in the very thing that has put those sins away. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10.

We would not wish God to think lightly of our sins, nor would He if such were our wish. God abhors sin, and it is our joy and rest to see that all that was due to us and to our sins has been borne by God's own Son. The cross has put our sins away forever, and it solemnly and clearly tells us that God is light and God is love.

But has that love, which thought of our deep spiritual need, and made such ample provision for it in Christ, withdrawn its eyes from us, not caring to behold us any more till we are seen in glory? Oh, no! the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and if not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, are we not of more value than many sparrows?

It is into the present love of God - the love that cares for us today - that our hearts need to be directed, for it is there they may find rest, and nowhere else.

We know no yesterday but the cross, and no tomorrow but the glory, but there is today - the wilderness and the things that surely come upon us there.

The power of God, like His love, is infinite. He is able to make the rough places smooth, and never to suffer a thorn to pierce our foot. And the knowledge of God's power is the very door by which

Satan often seeks to insinuate into the mind a doubt as to God's love. The soul reasons thus: "If God loves me with a Father's love,' why does He not do this or that for me? Why do my prayers remain so long unanswered?"

It is not because God does not love you that the answer to prayer is sometimes slow in coming, and that sometimes the answer is "No." God has lessons to teach which would never be learned if our will guided His hand. How much the beloved family at Bethany would have missed if Lazarus had not been suffered to go down to the grave. And what a loss it would have been if the thorn in the flesh had been taken away in answer to his thrice-repeated prayer.

There are many things that may remain a mystery to us on earth. How often the life, which to our view seemed so necessary, is taken away, while one that might have been more easily spared, is left to linger on year after year. God does not explain all this to us. He does not tell us His reasons, but He asks us to confide in His wisdom and His love. Let us have patience. The night will soon be gone, and in the morning light of that endless day we will see what is now hidden from our eyes.

If the past could be blotted out, and we could begin life's journey afresh, and God were to ask us whether we would choose our own path, and fill it up as it seemed best to us, or whether He would choose for us, would we not put it into His hand for Him to choose and lead?

"Choose the path, the way whatever Seems to Thee, O Lord, the best."

Surely faith would say so.

This is the time of His patience. He is seated on His Father's throne, but He does not yet have His bride. He waits in patience to see the fruit of the travail of His soul. Nor does He have the world kingdom now, but He who said, "Sit Thou at My right hand," also said, "until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

Psalm 110:1. Hence He waits in patience now. This is not the "kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Rev. 1:9. Soon it will be the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. And before then we shall be ushered into His presence in bodies of glory like His. What a scene of unutterable joy and delight!

Then from those cloudless heights we shall look back and remember "all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee." Then we shall see that the hand that ordered everything was a Father's hand, and that His way was better than our way. Rest in His love, lean on His bosom, till the day break, and the shadows flee away.

Present Trends Toward Man and Toward Woman

Read Colossians 2

In the second chapter of Colossians you get everything moving in one of two directions: toward the man or toward the woman. Does that sound like an enigma? Let us explain. In the 13th chapter of Revelation, verses 1-8, we have the man. He is the coming infidel head of the revived Roman Empire. Next, in the 17th chapter, verses 1-6 and 16-18, is the woman, the corrupt ecclesiastical system of the end time. Now we shall seek to make clear the connection which this man and this woman bear to the warnings given us in Colossians 2.

This address is primarily for Christians. We are here as those professing to know the Lord Jesus Christ, come into this world in grace and gone back in power to sit on the right hand of the majesty on high. From His exalted position there, He has sent down the Holy Spirit, and thus formed into one body all those on earth who know their sins forgiven through faith in His blood. Christ the Head in heaven together with the members here below form the mystical Christ of 1 Cor. 12:12 - "So also is the Christ." (J.N.D. Trans.). This is what the Apostle refers to in such glowing terms in verses 2 and 3 of Colossians 2 - "The mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." (J.N.D. Trans.).

The Apostle Paul was never satisfied with merely getting souls across the line into salvation; his desire was that they might go on to perfection. So I would suggest to every child of God that if you are under the impression that the chief thing is to get people saved, you need to rethink the whole matter. In the ministry of the Apostle, the burden was not only to get men saved, but to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." That goes far beyond the salvation of the soul from destruction. When the sinner steps across the threshold to receive salvation, he becomes a new creature in Christ. Still, he is only a babe. How much there is for him to learn and to enjoy! He will never be a true worshiper unless he is led on in the knowledge of what God has for him in Christ.

In my childhood I attended a certain Sunday school. We spent six months studying the Old Testament, and six, the New Testament. But in our study of the latter, we rarely got beyond the gospels and The Acts. Yet it is in the fourteen epistles of Paul that we discover our proper portion as believers in this present period of God's dealings in grace. To neglect these precious communications is to remain "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Eph. 4:14.

When the Lord Jesus led the twelve out to the mount of ascension, He there instructed them as to His desire for them after His departure. They were to return to Jerusalem and there wait until they should be endued with power from on high. While the twelve watched the gradual ascension of their Lord into heaven, angelic visitors said to them, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. Up to this point, neither the twelve nor any other of the saints of God were yet in true Christian position. Christianity starts the other side of the cloud! "A cloud

received Him out of their sight." We now have something which had never been before; we have a glorified Man at God's right hand. There He receives from God the second time the gift of the Spirit - this time that He might send Him upon the waiting believers here on the earth. This He does on the day of Pentecost, and thus the Church is brought into being. To put it into other words, Pentecost was the birthday of the Church.

The Church formed at Pentecost stands in need of much instruction in the privileges that properly appertain to her as the body of Christ. For this service the ascended Head provides prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Many of the instructions given to the early Church have come on down to us in the form of the inspired epistles of Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude. God expects us to become intelligent as to what is our proper Christian standing in this present period of His dealings with us. These communications are not meant merely for a learned few; they are the necessary food for all the members of Christ. We have a special place of nearness and privilege never accorded in any other period, nor will any of God's dealings with man in the days to come equal His bounty to us, the Church of God.

The Apostle Paul is here expressing his longing desire that these saints at Laodicea and Colosse may have their hearts "united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." Col. 2:2, 3. (J.N.D. Trans.). This is the burden of his heart. So we today should have a burden on our hearts to help the saints of God to find their way into the knowledge of all their proper portion in this most blessed time of God's dealings with man on the earth. Each individual child of God should possess this holy desire to delve into this storehouse of truth thus committed to us. God has told out to us the fullness of His heart that we in turn might be made glad. God desires that we share His joys, but we can do this only as we become intelligent as to our proper place in the scheme of God's present dealings.

Some few years back I met a Roman Catholic "brother" on the train. I felt led of the Lord to open a conversation with him which soon led to some discussion of what were our hopes as the professed children of God. I asked him if he had ever read the New Testament. He replied that he had read the four gospels, but never any of the epistles. I then asked him if he possessed a copy of the New Testament, and he said he did not. I offered to send him a Testament, a promise which I was soon able to fulfill. This was the beginning of a friendship which has lasted for seven years. He informs me now that he has read and enjoyed the epistles, and his intelligence in the truth of God has manifestly increased. You might challenge me with, But this ignorance of the epistles is among Catholics. I reply, Protestants are not far behind in their avoidance of the latter half of their Testaments. What the Apostle Paul calls, "my gospel" is almost as much of an unexplored mystery to Protestantism as it is to Rome. They are like the two-and-a-half tribes of Israel as they approached the borders of Canaan; they do not care to cross over. They are quite satisfied to settle down over on the wilderness side of Jordan; they are not interested in the conquest of Canaan and do not care to claim those things to which they have title as being the citizens of heaven. But the burden of the Apostle Paul in this second chapter of Colossians is that we might be in the good of what is properly ours, and not be betrayed into letting it slip away.

I would not like to be misunderstood. Please do not think that I am discouraging the preaching of, the gospel. May God bless the preaching of the gospel and may it continue. But let us not fall into

the error of thinking that this is the end of what God has in view for us. He desires that we enter into all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. See in this connection the warning of verse 4: "This I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." We live in dangerous days, and harder ones lie ahead. The nearer we get to the end, the more need we shall have of keeping close to the side of the blessed Lord. It is easy to miss the path. May God deliver us from self-confidence. Only in the path of dependence can we expect to be kept.

The burden of my heart is that young Christians may be thoroughly warned of the double danger that threatens our path. Greek historians often wrote of those two dangerous threats to the sailors who would navigate the straits of Messina. On the one hand lay the jagged threat of the Rock Scylla, while on the other there raged the hungry whirlpool of Charybdis. The only safety lay in steering carefully according to the charted course between the two. The twin dangers which threaten the saints of God today are brought together in this second chapter of Colossians. I refer to rationalism and ritualism. The first will finally head up in that infidel dictator of the revived Roman Empire of the last days; the second will be arrayed under the scarlet banner of the Jezebel of Revelation 17:4. Let us be prayerfully on our guard lest we be moved in the direction of either this "man" or this "woman." While they seem to represent diametrically different attitudes, yet, strangely enough, we find them working in close collaboration here in Revelation 17. The reason for this is that they are basically anti-Christian. What then is our protection from these sinister threats? Our safety lies in the Word of God and prayer. Like the two great pillars in the porch of Solomon's temple, Jachin (he shall establish) and Boaz (in it is strength), the Word of God and prayer will show us the path in these critical days.

I recently interviewed a young woman who had been drawn into the vortex of the Jehovah Witness delusion. She had grown up in one of our Sunday schools, used to repeat the lovely Scripture verses, and seemed to be coming along nicely. Then her family stopped coming to the meetings, and soon the girl was seen no more at the Sunday school. I suppose the two mighty pillars of Jachin and Boaz no longer guarded the porch (entrance) of her home. The result was worse than death: her faith was wrecked by the infidelity of the Witness blasphemies, and she dared say that Christ was a creature. Oh how unspeakably sad! Had she heeded the warnings that are given in this chapter, she would never have been led astray. Perhaps you are saying that such fancies have no attraction for you. Remember, we are no match for Satan. He has had six thousand years of experience in dealing with mankind, and he has succeeded in leading millions astray. Let us not play with the things against which God has so faithfully warned us.

The sixth verse of our chapter admonishes: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." As a brother and I were driving to Los Angeles, we came over some treacherous territory. There were sharp winding curves, steep hills, rugged mountains and deep drop-offs. Now and again we saw warning signs. On one especially bad descent there was a huge sign at the top which read, "FIRST WARNING." We were thankful for the sign. We went slowly down for about a half mile when we encountered another similar sign, "SECOND WARNING." This caused us to move with greater care. A half mile further on the tortuous decline we came upon still another large sign, "THIRD WARNING." How faithful the highway department had been in giving us due counsel. If we failed to heed their advice, we could not complain if we ran into serious trouble. Thank God for the warnings. Dear saint of God, whether you are betrayed to follow the infidel "man" or whether you become a disciple of the bedecked harlot, you will have to ignore

God's warning signs in order to fall into their clutches. God has guarded the way, and you cannot miss the path if the warnings are observed.

Notice verse 8. "Beware lest any man spoil you

through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Philosophy means the love of knowledge, or the love of wisdom, but whose wisdom? The wisdom of the natural man. Religious philosophy is man as man searching after God, if by chance he might find Him. The greatest philosophers of all time lived back in the days of the Greeks and the Romans. We have had our share of them in the last century. But man absolutely cannot rise higher than man. The homely illustration of a man trying to lift himself by his boot straps was never more applicable than to the situation of fallen man seeking to fathom the mystery of the Divine. So God has given us this faithful warning, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy."

As we read the ninth verse, let us do it with all reverence. In all the Word of God no higher peak of truth is reached than what we have here. Listen: "In Him [that is, in Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." It is a most noteworthy fact that this is the only place in the New Testament where we get the proper word for Godhead. The solemn term is applied here to the Person of Christ, and to Christ in manhood. for that is the force of the word "bodily The Man Christ Jesus was at the same time GOD in the most absolute sense. The heart bows in worship at such a revelation. I beseech you, dear young believer, surrender yourself, body, soul, and spirit to the conviction that Jesus is God. Adore Him as God incarnate, and you will be kept from the subtle philosophies of the day. We are living in days when the tempter is whispering that science knows more than revelation. That is the voice of the man, the infidel, the antichrist. He is questioning everything that God has revealed to us of the mystery of Christ. Our only safety is to refuse to listen to his overtures. The simplicity of faith alone can keep us.

We can have confidence that God will in His own time vindicate all His revelation. How different it is with the pronouncements of men. An illustration of this is the exposure of the Piltdown man hoax. For fifty years grave scientists had spoken in ponderous terms of this relic of prehistoric man. Then they found they had been the proved victims of a pseudoscientific prankster. The so-called human bones are those of a man, an ape, and a dog. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. But those of us who believed our Bibles, were never deceived by the so-called "evidence" of the Piltdown man, any more than we are by similar evidence of the Neanderthal man or of the Java man. All are the result of the wishful thinking of infidel scientists who have set aside the majestic account of the creation of man at the hand of God.

I suppose the leading infidel of recent times was the minister, Mr. Harry Emerson Fosdick. He coolly stated that he did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, or in the resurrection or the ascension. Then he further ventured the remarkable statement that he did not know of any other intelligent person who did believe in these revelations. What hopeless blindness! One wonders at the patience of God who allowed such a man to continue his course of blasphemy. Yet is it not a fact that there are many churches in this city today that would have felt flattered to have this same Harry Emerson Fosdick occupy their pulpit next Lord's day? Small wonder that the Apostle, out of a burdened heart, wrote the Corinthians of the misgivings that filled his mind - "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." 2 Cor. 11:3. Our only safety is in the surrender of our souls to the full conviction of the majesty and deity of His Person. Thus shall we be kept, adoring HIM.

The second danger brought before us in the chapter is that which leads toward the woman. What does this mean? Substituting religion for Christ. In other words, RITUALISM. As I drive around the city streets during the so-called holiday season, I am impressed by the extravagance of the Christmas displays. I have never seen them so elaborate. Does that prove that this city is nearer God than it has ever been? No, emphatically, No; it proves that it is moving nearer the woman, nearer the mother of harlots. Jezebel substitutes saints for Christ, and dogmas for revelation. We may look upon these ceramic figures as innocent attempts to visualize the historical events of the gospels. But did you ever stop to think of how short is the step from imagery to worship of the image?

From the prophetic word we learn that terrible days of darkness lie ahead. The world is soon to be plunged into the darkness of the most awful idolatry. Whether it is the worship of the image of the Christ child, or of the mother of the child, the worship of angels or saints, it is the same spirit as the worship of the image of the man. "And they worshipped the beast [the man], saying... who is able to make war with him?" Our Lord in speaking of these dreadful days said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." We are drawing very, very near to those days; the tribulation is just ahead. But thanks be to God, before the real storm can break on the scene we shall hear the shout in the air, and shall be caught up to meet our blessed Lord.

Christian friend, are you satisfied with the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, or have you begun to hunger for a bit of ritualism? Has the woman succeeded in arousing in your heart a discontent with Jesus only? Is Christ Himself enough, or would you prefer Christ AND -? Would you be better pleased if the speaker were clad in ecclesiastical robes? Do you crave the thrill of pomp and pageantry in worship? Would you like special days of feasts and fasts? Do you crave the bondage of "Touch not; taste not; handle not"? The woman is beckoning; her hand is outstretched; many are rallying to her standard. But let us never forget those awful words of the seer, "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for STRONG IS THE LORD GOD WHO JUDGETH HER." Rev. 18:8.

We are amazed as we search the Word to find that there is to be a close affinity between the infidel man and the ritualistic woman. One would wonder how the beast in his open infidelity could work with the ultra-religious woman. But he will! The one, clad in all her splendor, is seen astride the beast. They work in close collaboration. Together they march on in triumph through the world. All the world shall wonder after the beast. I used to puzzle as to how the whole world could be astonished at the sight of the beast. I knew the beast was not to be omnipresent. But now I am no longer puzzled. Man has found a way to make himself virtually omnipresent through the use of television. So now we understand how the beast will be able to appear daily before the eyes of his wondering subjects. Yes, they will be able to sit in their homes and see and hear the great infidel dictator. In close association with the beast will be the pomp and splendor of the woman.

Now that God has so graciously unveiled the future to us, shall we not profit by His warnings? We shall turn our faces neither toward the man nor toward the woman, but toward CHRIST. And who is HE? Hear again those wonderful words, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead." Now

join to this statement that in the 10th verse, "And ye are complete in Him." Glorious truth! Occasionally I am guest in a brand new home. The young couple has recently moved in. All is gleaming, resplendent in its newness. This young man and wife do not expect me to bring my hammer, saw, and chisel, and start to work. If I do, I can only spoil this lovely home. It is all finished. It is complete. So, dear saint of God, you are complete in Christ. In Him you possess all that God has for you. Who is this Christ? Let us read together a verse in Romans 9. We shall read it just as Paul wrote it. Remember, there are no punctuation marks in the original Greek. The latter part of verse 5 reads: "Christ... who is over all God blessed forever Amen." Isn't that magnificent? Does that not thrill your soul? Who is the One over all? He is God, blessed forever.

When our Lord was born into the world, His name was given at the direction of the Spirit of God. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." Again, in the 7th of Isaiah, verse 14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." "Which being interpreted is, God with us." Matt. 1:23. Not God's messenger to us, but God Himself with us.

Another title of God we find in the 3rd chapter of Exodus, 14th verse. "And God said unto Moses, / Am That I Am: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you." This is one of the grandest titles that God ever took. It gives us the idea of God as the ever existing ONE, the ETERNAL.

Turn now to the New Testament and observe how the blessed Lord took this title to Himself. See John's Gospel, 8th chapter, verse 53: "Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself?" Then verses 57 and 58: "Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty-years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am." Notice it is this very name of Exodus 3. He does not say, "Before Abraham was, I was," but "Before Abraham was, I Am." See also John 8:24: "If ye believe not that I Am He, ye shall die in your sins." This, beloved, is the crucial test of all our thinking and believing. "What think ye of Christ?" will be the decisive factor in our attaining heaven, or being left in outer darkness forever. With that little man Zaccheus, the consuming desire was to "see Jesus who He was." That made all the difference - who He was.

Read the incident of the healing of the ten lepers. They were all cleansed. One was a Samaritan. As he journeyed he discovered he was already cleansed. Immediately he turned back to seek the One who had cleansed him. Notice the wording: "He... glorified God, and fell... at His feet, giving Him thanks." That blessed I Am accepted the worship, and in connection with it raised the query, Where are the nine? Only this Samaritan has returned to give glory to God. You remember the young man who came to Jesus with the request that He would tell him how to attain eternal life. He addressed the Lord as "good." Immediately Jesus reminds him that there is none good but God. If he would call Jesus good, he must give Him the rest of the title, and own that He was God. Absolute goodness is found only in God.

It is noticeable that our Lord never went about advertising His deity. He quietly assumed it, and allowed the serene dignity of His Person to convict His hearers as to who He was. Blessed are those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. In John 18:4, 5, when they came out to arrest the Lord just before His crucifixion, He challenged them, "Whom seek ye?" "They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth." In verse 6 Jesus answers, "I Am," and they fell backward to the ground. One

ray of His personal Godhead glory was allowed for a moment to shine through. The I Am was there. Then again in the same Gospel He is called before Pilate to answer as to who He is. So He answers, "Thou sayest that / Am."

In view of all these divine revelations as to the glories of the Person of the Son of God, shall we not surrender completely all our reasonings, and fall at His blessed feet in adoration? In 2 Cor. 10:5 we read, "Casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." If we do this we will be kept, and not only so, but we will be happy. Many are going to say in that coming day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils [demons]?" But He will say, "I never knew you." It is not lip service to philosophy or religion; it is knowing Him as the I Am. We surrender ourselves, our lips, our eyes to Him; we hail Him as God; we fall at His feet and worship. May the Lord Himself keep us until that day. C.H. Brown

"O Jesus! everlasting God!

Who didst for sinners shed

Thy blood Upon the accursed tree;

And, finishing redemption's toil,

Didst win for us the happy spoil,

All praise we give to 'Thee."

The Preserving Power of the Word

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

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

Whenever there is a surrender of what the flesh holds dear and cleaves to, for Christ's sake, there is blessing, and the soul that dares to mortify the flesh and resist its claims is ever rewarded by a clearer revelation of the Lord Himself. As it were, the displacing of the lower makes room for the development of the higher and purer affection.

The reason why there is often so much darkness and uncertainty as to God's will among us, is that the flesh is allowed to work, and the result is dimness of spiritual vision. It costs us too dearly when we cannot say, "No" to the clamorous demands of our fleshly natures. Never till we see it in the light of the judgment seat of Christ shall we know how much we have suffered in soul, and how much eternal reward we have lost by our weakness and cowardice in resisting the flesh and its claims. People complain of weak faith, but they would speak far more truly if they complained of their weak obedience. "Light is sown for the righteous." Psalm 97:11. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7:17. Let us see in Christ, our heavenly Pattern, the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. We will see in Christ the perfectly dependent, obedient One. Words Of Truth

Thoughts Upon Psalm 22

This beautiful psalm at once opens up to us a scene which to every Christian must be especially precious, that is, "the cross." But then, it is the cross in connection with the awful question of sin-bearing, and the consequent forsaking of Christ on the part of God. There are several ways in which we can look at the cross and the Blessed One who hung there - ways which tell out the fullness of that scene which can never be forgotten in time or eternity.

There are at least five ways of looking at that scene. In the first place, we see the expression of human guilt in the crucifying of the Lord Jesus Christ. From man's standpoint we see it to be but the unfolding of the human heart - terrible, desperate wickedness!

Viewing the cross in this way, we see the true state of ourselves naturally. It tells me what I am as a part of that old creation that failed to appreciate the Holy Son of God when He came down here in perfect grace and love. Man showed his contempt of God's Christ by putting Him on the cross as a malefactor. Oh! how awful is this disclosure of man - this expression of the state of his heart. It is here we see that not only is the fruit of the tree corrupt, but the tree itself. Man is that tree; a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

When the representatives of the human family raised up the Son of God upon the cross, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," the trial of man was finished, and the verdict of heaven was returned - "the whole world standeth guilty before God." He now sees the first Adam creation as an utterly ruined thing, under condemnation. The Lord in view of the cross had decided this when He said, "Now is the judgment of this world" John 12:31.

Secondly, we may view the cross as the expression of Satan's hatred and seeming triumph. It was there that he bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, but his seeming triumph was to return upon his own head in everlasting defeat. The judgment of the first Adam race was expressed there and the ground of Satan's defeat (and his being banished from God's domains forever) was found there also. Christ had said in view of the cross, the scene of His conflict with death, and Him who had the power of death: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" John 12:31. The head of the serpent was bruised even at the time of his seeming triumph. Blessed be God, all the powers of darkness were foiled; every foe of God and man was conquered when that Holy One gave His brow to the thorns, His hands to the nails, and bowed His head and died! On the third day He stands in resurrection - the proof of His having vanquished all. All praise be to His peerless name!

Thirdly, in Christ's going to the cross we see His perfect love and obedience expressed to the Father. This is told out in the two following scriptures: "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." John 14:30, 31. "Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy

will, O God." Heb. 10:5-7. From the manger to the cross we see in the blessed Lord Jesus one continuous display of perfect love and obedience to the Father. He was in life a whole "meat offering" (Lev. 2), and in death - that death viewed as the expression of His love and obedience to God - a perfect burnt offering, "an offering... of a sweet savor unto the Lord" (Lev. 1). Fragrant with frankincense was that sacrifice, and appreciated by God the Father with an infinite appreciation. The cross, viewed in this way, was the culminating point of Christ's love and obedience to God. He could go no farther down in the path of self-surrender - He had reached the lowest possible point - the lowest possible depth! And all this was as a matter of love and obedience, that the world might know that He loved the Father, and that the heart of the Father might be satisfied and refreshed by such an expression of love and obedience in man. The first Adam had failed in love and obedience; here was a recompense for it all, in the last Adam. God is satisfied. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:9-11. This is the glorious answer of God to the love and obedience of His dear Son. He went down to the lowest depth; now He is raised to the highest possible height. Shall not our hearts exclaim, He is worthy! He is worthy!

In the fourth place, we view the cross as the infinite expression of God's love to a guilty world. As it is written: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Here God makes known to a guilty world the fact that He loves it. He shows them His heart! Precious display of God! Blessed making known of the love of His heart! It was unasked for, and undeserved, yet His heart is seen exhibiting itself - flowing out in the gift of His Son. Unworthy man is the object toward which this love is shown and toward which it flowed in all its mighty fullness.

Creation might display His power and wisdom, and Providence His beneficence toward His creatures, but it is in the gift of His only begotten Son that we learn the fullness of His love toward guilty, lost and undone man. God, standing upon the lofty height of His throne, viewed man in his ruin and misery, and loved him. His dear Son was given up to express that love, so infinite and so boundless. God's delight from all eternity was given up as proof of that love. The Father would give that bosom companion up that poor sinners might know that He loved them. Oh! how overwhelming is the thought of all this - this display of pure, infinite, and undeserved love on the part of an offended God. May we know its blessed actuating power in our souls; may it constrain us to yield ourselves unreservedly to Him who loved us even unto death!

The fifth way in which we may view the cross is as the place where the great question of sin was settled between God and Christ, the sinner's substitute. It is by viewing the cross in that light that we are brought back to the 22nd psalm, where we see the blessed Lord in the circumstances of a sin-bearer. How solemn are the opening words: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." Could anything be more solemn? From all eternity up to this moment there had been not a single bit of distance between God and His dear Son, but here, all was changed. It was, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and, "Thou hearest Me not." Why this change? Had the Son faltered? Had the Father's joy in His Son diminished? Neither. What then? Sin was in question. Christ had taken the sinner's place;

sins and iniquities were laid upon Him; He must be treated as the sinner (substitutionally), and until God was glorified concerning sin, there could be no communion between Him and the Holy Sufferer.

Let none for a moment suppose that God's delight in His Son had lessened in the least degree; that could never be. But rather, while sin was upon His Son, the very holiness of His nature demanded a suspension of communion, and a distance between them. It is here we learn the true nature and deserts of sin - what it is in itself, and what was needed to put it away.

When we speak of distance coming in between God and the blessed Lord on the cross, it was not that there was anything in Him personally to cause that distance. No, He was emphatically "the Holy One and the Just." He knew no sin, personally. It was sin that was imputed to Him, and iniquities laid upon Him, which caused the distance. He voluntarily took the place of infinite moral distance which belonged to the sinner, and there became subject to the wrath and judgment of God.

This is the subject of the 22nd psalm - not that man is not seen, but God is referred to throughout - all is received as from Him. Bulls may beset Him, and dogs may encompass Him, but He receives death at God's hands: "And Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death." Man did his worst with God's Lamb, but as to atonement, man was not in the scene except as a spectator with no power to comprehend what was happening. In those three hours of darkness, none but God and the One who suffered can tell what was endured.

This was what the Blessed Lord was contemplating while prostrate in the garden of Gethsemane. He there was anticipating what He here is seen enduring. There the dark shadow of the cross and the outlines of that cup passed before Him, which brought Him into deep agony of soul; here, however, He is overwhelmed in the horrors of the judgment and wrath found in that bitter cup. Alone, at infinite distance from God, and enwrapped in impenetrable darkness, He experienced the unutterable woes of the lowest pit, its darkness, its depth. God's wrath lay hard upon Him. He was afflicted with all His waves. The fierce wrath of a sin-hating God passed over Him. His terrors cut Him off. (Psalm 88.) It was then those words were fulfilled which said, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me." Psalm 42:7. Such was God's holiness, and such was God's hatred of sin, that nothing short of all this could put it away and open up a way for the blessing of salvation to flow out far and near. Infinite claims needed an infinite sacrifice to meet them. This was done when the lowly Lord Jesus Christ laid Himself on the sin-offering altar of Calvary. There sin was perfectly atoned for and put away; the curse of a broken law was borne; the justice of God was satisfied; the throne, majesty, and glory of God were all vindicated. There God was infinitely glorified concerning sin, man's need perfectly met, and the ground laid for the righteous carrying out of all the purposes of God.

Thoughts Upon Psalm 22

The holy Sufferer and forsaken One is heard from the horns of the unicorns: "save Me from the lion's mouth: for Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns." v. 21. And so the work being finished, redemption accomplished, Satan vanquished, death robbed of its sting, and the grave of its victory, God raises the Blessed One up from among the dead; then immediately that mighty conqueror began to dispense the spoils of the victory: "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren:

in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." This was literally fulfilled when Jesus said to Mary after He arose, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17. Raised up from the low depths of that death, and standing in resurrection, it was His great joy to bring His people into a new relationship with Himself, and declare the Father's name in a way that it had never been declared before. Blessed family oneness is expressed in those words, "My Father, and your Father... My God, and your God." He is not ashamed to call us brethren, saying, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." Heb. 2:12.

Is there not something inconceivably precious in the thought that this was the first act after He arose from the dead - to declare the Father's name to His brethren, and to make them acquainted with the fact of their new place before God in family association with Himself? Hitherto His disciples had been members of a nation which had been brought into outward nearness to God, and who were individually the people of God. Now they are brought into corporate family oneness with the risen Lord Himself. If we remembered this on every occasion when gathered together to celebrate His praise, how high and holy our strains would be, and how sweet would be the flowing forth of that which God delights to accept from grateful hearts.

But, it is not the purpose of our psalm to introduce us into all the glories belonging to the Church, and the calling and privileges of it. In fact the Church is not the subject of the psalm; it simply states in the 22nd verse, Christ speaking prophetically of Himself, that He would declare the Father's name to His brethren, and sing praises in the midst of the congregation, which is interpreted as the Church (Heb. 2:12). Then it passes on with what the psalm is occupied with, that is, Israel's restoration and blessing, and the nation's and the earth's blessing in the millennial period yet to come, when "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that

day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." Zech. 14:9. Then it shall be said, "Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all ye the seed of Israel." Psalm 22:23. This evidently takes us into the "age to come" - not into eternity, for nationalities cease there, but into the "age to come," when Christ shall have taken away the joint-heirs to glory, and have returned with them to judge the living, restored Israel, and those saved of the nations, when Satan shall be bound, and "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

It is this that our psalm points to, from verse 23 to the

end. And how interesting to know that this present sin-blighted scene shall be so relieved and refreshed under the righteous sway of the rightful King. Not only will God bring the now scattered tribes of Israel from the north and the south, from the east and the west (Isa. 43:5, 6) and establish them in their own land, and make Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth, but He will also bless the saved nations, and cause them to serve and worship the King - the Lord of Hosts that reigns in Mount Zion. "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the governor among the nations." And what then? "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear Him." Here it refers not to the Church, as in verse 22, but to the mighty millennial gatherings, when the center of the nation's and Israel's gatherings shall be "Zion

the city of the great King," and the King Himself the object of universal adoration. Blessed time! Blessed release from Satan's power!

Then waves of blessing shall roll forth from the grand center until they have reached the utmost limits of the King's vast domains. His kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, and the tide of blessing shall wash the utmost limits. These will not be waves of demoralizing evil, but those of wondrous ennobling and exalting blessing, which shall result in the acknowledgment of the supremacy and worthiness of the One who is then reigning.

Blessed are the purposes of God! He will not stop until all is found in blessed acknowledgment of that once lowly Lord Jesus, for it is the mystery of His will that He has so graciously made known to us, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." Eph. 1:10. God has purposed that His dear Son, the once rejected and cast-out Jesus, should be the grand center of heavenly and earthly glory, that every nation of the earth should worship Him (Zech. 14:16), and that the angels of God should be ascending and descending upon Him (John 1:51). Thus God will honor the One who honored Him even to death!

But in contemplating this vast scene of coming glory, we do well to remember that it is the fruit of the death of the cross that God's blessed Son endured. All is based upon and flows from that death and the atonement made by it. There can be no blessing for the fallen race and a sin-blighted creation apart from the cross. It had to be endured first, by the very Son of God, with the bearing of the judgment and the forsaking. And then blessings infinite and universal can flow forth without a hindrance; yes, the whole scene shall exult in blessing under the righteous scepter of the King of kings.

Thus does this wonderful psalm introduce us to not only the ground of blessing - the forsaking and the wrath-bearing of Christ upon the cross, but it also spreads before us the whole scene of future millennial blessing and glory, the precious fruit of that Cross endured by Him. Then, not only shall the heavens adore and worship Him, but everything beneath the sun shall bow down before Him and own Him Lord of all.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the once-rejected but now enthroned One, He is worthy, worthy of all!

"Hark! the sound of Jubilee

Loud as mighty thunders roar

Or the fullness of the sea

When it breaks upon the shore!

Hallelujah! for the Lord

God omnipotent shall reign:

Hallelujah! let the word

Echo round the earth and main."

Ready Always to Testify in Season and Out

Once we visited with a Christian funeral director in a large city. We found him rejoicing in the great things God had done for him, and he was ready to give an answer to those who might ask him about his hope in Christ. In fact, he seemed to be quite ready to speak for his Lord when the opportunity presented itself.

Our Christian friend told us about many of the religious funeral services conducted in these days. He found most of them very distressing. The dead were generally eulogized, without any indication that they had faith, which is requisite for admittance to those regions of bliss where Christ is the center and the theme. In such services there is no real comfort for the bereaved, nor anything solid on which the living can rest. The flowers and beauty with which death is surrounded only tend to conceal the stark realities of death, while shallow sentiments and empty songs tend to obscure the importance of preparation for leaving this world.

Funerals run the gamut from paganish and foolish rites through ritualistic emptiness, and finally, on rare occasions, to a simple Christian testimony to the faith of the departed and a presentation of Christ to the lost. But preachers who have only empty platitudes, ideas on current world problems, reformation, or psychological panaceas to offer their congregations from week to week, certainly prove their bankruptcy at funerals. There, behind all the beautiful facade, death is as real as ever. A loved one has left this world, never to return, and the living may soon have to pass the same way. Soothing words without the reality of life in Christ neither console the bereaved nor offer hope to the living. At many funerals, it is evident that the speakers are only blind guides leading their followers into an eternal ditch.

But this Christian director told us something more appalling. He said that many real Christian ministers, even some with a reputation for faithful gospel preaching, have given up telling out the gospel at funerals. They no longer present the way of life and the way of death to a company wherein are souls without Christ and without hope. And this is done under the specious plea that they are unwilling to preach the gospel to a "captive audience." By that they mean, people who did not come to hear the gospel, but merely came out of respect to the departed. That these unsaved listeners have invaluable souls which are on the brink of eternity, and that they need Christ desperately, does not move such preachers to present the Lord Jesus as the only way to life. Their false propriety leads to a grave dereliction of duty. We know a dear Christian who recently besought a preacher of some renown in fundamentalist circles to give the gospel at the funeral of a relative, but his plea was refused on that unsound basis of not taking advantage of a captive audience.

In the days of King Ahab of Israel, God espoused Israel's cause against the Syrian oppressors. On one occasion the Syrians were so routed that their king, Ben-Hadad, sought refuge in the camp of Israel, and Ahab, instead of acting for God, sent the enemy away with a covenant of peace (1 Kings 20). He was soon to learn from the prophet who disguised himself and came before him in a disheveled condition that God had sent that enemy to him, and he had failed in not acting for Him

against the enemy. It was a most solemn matter for the king of Israel to fail to seize the moment after God had brought Ben-Hadad to him, and the result was that Ahab's life was to be forfeited for the life of the man he let go. Let us just reverse the case, and picture to ourselves certain unbelievers who would never of their own volition attend a gospel meeting, but God so ordered circumstances that they unavoidably found themselves before a man of God who could point them to Christ. Perhaps it was the only time in their life when they had been brought face to face with a man who could tell them they were lost, and that salvation was freely available through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall the servant of the Lord who let them go on unwarned, unprepared to meet their God, and without having been directed to the only Savior of sinners, be accounted guiltless? Shall such palpable neglect be overlooked?

Timothy was told to preach the word "in season and out of season," but he would be circumscribed today by human rules; he would be told that delicate propriety for the feelings of people (many of them on the threshold of the pit) would dictate times when "the word" simply should not be preached. The light would be concealed while people stumble on in the darkness. The rich man in hades (of Luke 16) was so concerned lest his five brothers on earth reach the same dread place where he was that he pleaded with Abraham to let Lazarus go back to warn them. But today even a Lazarus would, under some circumstances, be hindered from warning them. We do not believe that the rich man would have said, But be careful and do not let him warn them if they are a captive audience. Better that they be warned as a captive audience than be captive where the rich man was.

Shall a lifeguard at the beach say, I will not rescue a drowning man unless he signifies that he wishes to be rescued? After all, he is a captive audience, and a victim of circumstances, but is he to be denied rescue for that reason? Is a man on the road that leads to destruction to be denied the hearing of the one and only way of escape simply because he did not expect to hear it at a funeral?

There is much to be said for giving the gospel at funerals. For one thing, it is a conditioned audience that is in attendance. They are sobered by the reality of death. Lightness and levity of spirit that so often hinder reception of the gospel are not apt to be present. And when the departed has been a Christian, what better testimony can be given than publicly telling the grounds of the confidence that the departed had, and how the same is open to all who will accept Christ? Without the Scriptures there is no unlocking of the door to the future, for God alone can draw aside the veil that separates between the living and the dead. The best that an unsaved man can do is to come to the verge of eternity and say, "I am taking a leap in the dark." But it is not darkness to the believer; death is only the vehicle that speeds him to paradise - "Thou shalt be with Me in paradise." When Paul was caught up to paradise, he heard such things that it is impossible to convey them in human language, or to the human mind. That glory so enraptured his soul, that he had a fervent desire to depart this world and be with Christ. (2 Cor. 12:1-4; Phil. 1:23).

Even the telling of the peace, joy, and bliss for the soul and spirit of him who departs this life with faith in Christ, should have an impelling effect on those who have it not. Perhaps they will say, That person has something worth having, something that I should have.

We freely admit that giving out the gospel to those congregated at a funeral should be done with the propriety that is becoming to a solemn assembly. Loud and boisterous preaching would be

unbecoming and unseemly. The manner of the speaker should not bring reproach on the very truth he seeks to present, but if a kind and loving setting forth of the only Savior of sinners is objectionable, still, a man of God cannot forbear to speak. Consideration should be shown to the bereaved, and a lengthy service should be avoided. Never should it have the semblance of a harangue. But let not the speaker lose sight of his responsibility to the Lord.

A friend of ours was called upon to conduct a funeral service which he did in faithfulness, and with proper decorum. In the audience that day were a young man and his wife, who were killed in an automobile accident later that same day, and their bodies were brought to the same undertaker. What would be on the speaker's conscience today if he had avoided telling the need of a Savior and the opportunity to accept Him then? Perhaps it may have been used to their salvation ere they were ushered into eternity. And even if they were not saved, the speaker delivered his own soul. That is what Paul meant when he said, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Acts 20:26, 27. He had obvious reference to Ezekiel 33, where we read, "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." vv. 7-9. Specious pleas, notwithstanding, if he fail to warn them, he is guilty of their blood. What a solemn thought!

Shall the Lord have to say to such at the judgment seat, I sent such-and-such to you to hear the gospel at your mouth, and you altogether held your peace? We know that God has other instruments He can use if some are unfaithful, and that He is sovereign and His purposes will come to pass, yet a servant's responsibility is also clear. Responsibility is commensurate with the place of privilege a servant has. The parables of the pounds of Luke 19, and the talents of Matthew 25 bear witness to this. There we find the servant is not rewarded for his success, but for his faithfulness.

Living Christianity Real

The Apostle Paul's life, his whole conduct, confirmed the testimony which he bore; it formed a part of it. Accordingly (it is always the case) the fruit of his labors answered in character to him who labored; the Christianity of the Thessalonians resembled that of Paul. It was like the walk of the Lord Himself whom Paul followed so closely. It was "in much affliction," for the enemy could not bear so plain a testimony, and God granted this grace to such a testimony, and "with joy of the Holy Ghost."

Happy testimony to the power of the Spirit working in the heart! When this is so, everything becomes testimony to others. They see that there is, in Christians, a power of which they are ignorant, motives which they have not experienced, a joy which they may scoff at but which they do not possess. There is a conduct which strikes them, and which they admire, although they do not follow it, and a patience which shows the impotence of the enemy in striving against a power that endures everything, and that rejoices in spite of all his efforts. The world may have said, What can we do with those who allow themselves to be persecuted without becoming less joyful, nay, whom it makes more so, who rise above all our motives when left to themselves, and who, if oppressed, possess their souls in perfect joy in spite of all our opposition? What can we do with those who are unconquered by torments, finding in these only an occasion for bearing a stronger testimony for Christ that is beyond our power? At peace, all of life is a testimony; in death, even in torture, it is still more so. Such is the Christian where Christianity exists in its true power, in its normal condition according to God - the Word (of the gospel) and the presence of the Spirit reproduced in the life, in a world estranged from God.

Thus it was with the Thessalonians, and the world, in spite of itself, became an additional witness to the power of the gospel. An ensample to believers in other places, they were the subject of report and conversation to the world, which was never weary of discussing this phenomenon, so new and so strange, of people who had given up all that governed the human heart, all to which it was subject, and worshiped one only living and true God, to whom even the natural conscience bore testimony. The gods of the heathen were the gods of the passions, not of the conscience. And this gave a living reality, and actuality, to the position of Christians and to their religion. They waited for His Son from heaven.

Happy indeed are those Christians whose walk and whole existence made of the world itself a witness for the truth, who were so distinct in their confession, so consistent in their life, that an apostle did not need to speak of that which he had preached, of that which he had been among them. The world spoke of it for him and for them.

Red Sea and the Jordan

The Red Sea for the children of Israel was the door of deliverance from the house of bondage, placing them forever beyond Pharaoh's power and setting them in the wilderness as a redeemed people brought to God. It is to us a type of the death and resurrection of Christ, not so much in the passover aspect of the former, where the blood met the claims of God's justice as regards the people's sins, but as that which has annulled Satan's power, delivered us from it, and brought us to God in perfect peace, so that we can joy in Him whose power has wrought so great a deliverance for us. This line of truth will be found in the epistle to the Romans.

Jordan was the entrance into Canaan. The crossing of it is in nowise a type of the death of the body, nor is Israel's entering into it a picture of the departure of a believer to be with Christ. It was when the people had crossed Jordan that the wars of Canaan properly began. There will be no fighting in heaven, no Canaanites to be dispossessed when we get there. But the Jordan must be crossed before Canaan can be reached, and Canaan, or rather what answers to it, is our place now, if indeed we enter there by faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. If the passage of the Red Sea is our redemption from Satan's power, so that henceforth we might walk with God through wilderness scenes, at peace with Him and standing in His favor, He being for us in all His love and unailing resources, the crossing of the Jordan is our entrance by faith into the blessed fact that we have not only died with Christ, but that we who were dead in sins have been quickened together with Him, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him.

The Red Sea and the Jordan have closed forever our history as men in the flesh, and now we have a new place in Christ before God, and are in spirit associated with Him where He is now, having been quickened with His life, and having the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. And this is the true Christian position, the proper portion of every believer. But let it be remembered that it is one thing for all these things to be true of the believer when viewed as in the place which the grace and power of God has made his, and another for the soul to be consciously standing in possession of it all. It is in the epistle to the Ephesians that our heavenly position and privileges are unfolded, and it is there we learn the need of the whole armor of God to enable us to stand (even when it is known) in the present enjoyment of what is infallibly and eternally ours in Christ.

Reflections

A Christian ought to be a comforter, with kind words on his lips and sympathy in his heart; he should carry sunshine wherever he goes and diffuse happiness around him. If you see Jesus and abide in the light of His countenance habitually, your faces, your characters, your lives, will grow resplendent, even without your knowing it. If the tender mercy of God has visited us, and done much more for us than I can tell or than you can hear, let us ourselves exhibit tender mercy in our dealings with our fellowmen. He lives most and lives best who is the means of imparting spiritual life to others.

The Rubbish in the Garden

Suppose your neighbor had a heap of rubbish in his garden, and you saw him turning it over very diligently every day, and constantly coming away looking very crestfallen and disappointed. You would be sure that he had expected to find something that was worth the search. One day you ask him over the hedge if there is anything valuable in the heap of stuff he has there. "Oh no," he says, "it is only rubbish, of no value to me or anyone else."

But the next day you see him turning it over again and looking as disappointed as ever, and this occurs day after day for weeks. You would think, "Whatever that man says, it is evident he has not given up the expectation of finding something there."

Many believers are like this. They say that there is no good in themselves, and that they do not expect to find any, but, nevertheless, they suffer a good deal of self-disappointment from time to time, and this proves that they have not really given up the thought of self-improvement. It is strange that we should be so foolish, in the light of Scripture and after all the experience we have had.

Let me carry the illustration a little further. One day you see your neighbor applying a lighted match to the heap of rubbish, and then standing by it until the whole is consumed to ashes. You stroll down the garden and then make some remark about it. He says, "I can see now what a fool I have been in wasting so much time over this rubbish heap. The owner of the garden knew all about it, and he told me it was nothing but rubbish, and I proved it to be so every time I turned it over; yet I must have had an idea there was something good in it because I was so disappointed to find nothing but rubbish. Now I am glad, it is all burned and I shall waste no more time over it."

You can see now that he not only says it is rubbish, but he has really judged it to be such, and has given it up as perfectly worthless.

God has judged the flesh absolutely in the death of Christ. "Our old man is crucified with Him" Rom. 6:6. The heap of rubbish is burned; it is cleared away absolutely for God. But it is necessary that we should reach, in our souls, the same conclusion as God.

The Scriptural Meaning of Three Words: Sin, Sins, and Transgressions

Generally speaking, the word sin is used for the evil nature from which sins - the actions, the fruit of that nature - spring, coming forth independently of any provocation by or resistance to the law.

Transgressions are sins which become such because of the positive infringement of 'a known command or prohibition - a stepping over the line laid down. It has often been pointed out how that Rom. 3:1 to 5:11 deals with the question of sins and Rom. 5:12 to 8:39, with sin. The first is met by Christ's dying for me; the second, by my dying with Him. Adam brought in the state of sin, in which Cain was born, but Cain murdered his brother, which was the fruit of an evil nature in this state. The one was sin (the nature), the other, the sinful deed produced by it.

We must have deliverance from the former, and forgiveness for the latter, before we can stand in God's presence in the light and be at peace. A sinner is not chargeable before God as a matter of judgment for what he is, but for what he has done.

We who are born in sin, have also sinned against God; and thus our practice and our state are both in ruin. Take a common case to illustrate sin, sins, and transgressions. My child has very evil habits; he throws stones and breaks the windows. His conscience tells him that it is wrong. Where did he get the mischievous nature that likes to do wrong? From his parents. That is sin. But the actions are sins, known, too, by his natural conscience. I send him a message forbidding this evil practice. Again he does it. This now is transgression or trespass. This was like the law given to sinners. It added the authority of God to what the natural conscience knows of good and evil, in forbidding the evil. But the law always assumed sin in the nature, though it did not reveal the fact of its existence. You could not forbid a person to do a thing that he had no intention or nature capable of doing. Hence, "By the law is the knowledge of sin"; that is, the nature which it has discovered. If when you go out you tell the children that there is something in that drawer, but they are not to know what is there, every child in the house is at once eager to know. The command provoked the nature which is opposed to it. This is what the law did. Paul says, "It was added for the sake of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19; J.N.D. Trans.), and "that sins by the commandment' might become exceeding sinful"; that is, it became transgression. Hence, too, in Rom. 5:13, "Sin is not imputed when there is no law."

The Seven Churches

The Spirit of God has given us in the addresses to the seven churches a picture of the moral phases of the Church's history from the time of its departure in heart from Christ until its utter rejection by Him. The last four are clearly all found at the end, and are the result of the first three. At Ephesus there was the leaving of first love, the heart having gone from Christ. No activities in judging evil could compensate in His estimation for that, and while it exposed the Church to His judgment, it also left an open door for other evils which soon followed.

At Smyrna there were two divisions in the church - those who held to the truth and suffered at the hands of the world for it, and those who set up an earthly legal system to oppose. Some maintained the true heavenly calling, and others set up Judaism, an earthly calling, with Christian names for things. It is remarkable that we only get those who "say they are Jews," again mentioned in Philadelphia where, after a long period of forgetfulness of these truths, the Lord has revived the heavenly side of Christianity. Smyrna is followed by Pergamos, and the Church then openly accepted the patronage of the world; its downfall was complete. What the enemy cannot successfully oppose, he will change his attitude toward, and under his patronage it is sure to wither. When Balaam accused Israel to God, it was of no avail; when he got at the people and allied them with the Midianites, his ends were accomplished.

One need not dwell on popery with its dark history of idolatry, blood, and crime, which Jezebel in Thyatira presents. Only blind eyes do not see its character depicted here. Yet it has its remnant who are discerned amid the corrupt mass by the searching, yet gracious, eye of the Master - those who have not known the depths of Satan, and who are counseled to hold fast till He comes.

Sardis is well recognized as giving us a picture of Protestantism, the state religions which came out of the Reformation when God raised up deliverers for His people from the yoke of their oppressors, and gave back to the Church an open Bible, and the precious foundation truth of justification by faith, through chosen and honored vessels. But how soon they sank down, as Israel under the judges, into forgetfulness of the God who had wrought for their deliverance! State churches are a gross admixture of worldliness and politics, though one gladly owns the faith and faithfulness of the many honored servants of the Lord who have been used of Him to maintain something of life toward God amid it all. Here too is a remnant of faithful ones who will be fully owned of Him in that day, while the dead and formal part will share the judgment of the world at His coming, since it is in reality only the world with the heightened guilt of the Christian name attached to what openly dishonors Him.

Philadelphia is the revival of the truth of the heavenly calling, the knowledge of the Person of Christ, and a care for His name and glory. Its condition of "little strength" is answered by the pledge on His part who has "all power... in heaven and in earth" of an "opened door, which no man can shut" (J.N.D. Trans.). Nothing can hinder the testimony save the unfaithfulness of those who should maintain it. But it will be a testimony to Him, and not to their own knowledge or zeal, if it is to meet His approval. A warning is here given to "hold fast" lest the crown be taken by another,

and the encouragement is, "I come quickly." To limit it in its application to any select company savors of the narrowness of man's heart and mind. Doubtless it points to the revival of God's truth which manifestly is found among His people today (as the wise virgins wake up to trim their lamps), but to seek to define its limits would be to forget the widespread dissemination and, let us hope, love of Christ and truth, though many sad blemishes are found in the ways of those who are content with a wider path than the one many are assured the Lord delights to have His people found in. But all will get their share of praise or blame when He who silently is taking account of His people's way shall manifest everything in the penetrating light of His presence.

What then of Laodicea? It seems hardly a gracious thing for saints to brand each other with this mark. Yet few there are, if truthful, who cannot find a measure of it in themselves to be judged and confessed, unless sufficiently blinded by a good opinion of themselves to have forgotten the measure of the Christian's responsibility and path - the obligation or the call to walk as He walked. How much room for confession this leaves! How little for boastful pretension! Yet if it humbles, how it also cheers to look at Him and His blessed pathway through a world of sin and sorrow - ministering, not ministered to, save by the hands and hearts of those who out of His fullness were receiving "grace upon grace."

If I look around in Christendom, I need not be at a loss to discover what is really Laodicea. "Lukewarm" is a mixture of hot and cold, and modern revivalism is just that. The alabaster box of ointment has been forgotten, and man is the object of many an earnest worker who creates a stir amidst what otherwise would soon be seen to be dead enough toward God. But we see churches growing rapidly wealthy today, where the poor have no place, where one can hear popular and eloquent preachers, sensuous music, and religious songs which the world can adopt; all this, while, save in a remnant, life to

God is wanting. Laodicea is to Philadelphia, I believe, what Pergamos was to Smyrna. Popularize truth and you have spoiled it effectually. Adapt the gospel to man's tastes and you most effectually take away the offense of the cross, and if the whole counsel of God is not declared, the world will thank you for so yielding the cross as to make it attractive.

The sensuous in religion is eagerly sought today, and all that appeals to the natural man; this, in its broad features, is Laodicea. The Lord recognizes those mixed up with it who are really not of it, and whose hearts can only be kept awake by the rebukes and chastening which love inflicts. But for them Christ knocks at the door. He prefers the most intimate fellowship with those who care for His company. "I will come in, to him, and sup with him, and he with Me."

The masses, however, know Him not at all. Like the foolish virgins, they have no oil. The Lord counsels them to buy of Him what they lack. If we

look at these pictures of the four churches as thus developed, each one continuing as a distinct thing until the end, we must not forget that instead of closely defined edges, they are found to overlap and interlace at their edges; the nearer we get to the distinctly pronounced character of each, the more marked and separate the lines will be.

May the Lord give us discernment as to these things, that we may avoid what is offensive to Him, and be content with His approval and His company until He calls us up through that open door in

heaven to share His throne and glory, and to view from thence the execution of the well-earned wrath upon those who in a day of grace have refused to own Him Lord.

Shall We Know Each Other in Heaven?

It may astonish some of our readers to know that there is any confusion about it, but if they were asked to set forth from Scripture a solid explanation of the matter, they might be hard pressed to do it.

First, let us have it clearly before us that we are speaking of the time when all the saints will be at home in the Father's house, all in bodies of glory like unto Christ's. The subject of the knowledge of the souls and spirits of those who have already departed from this life to be with Christ is another matter, but the topic which we have chosen concerns not the unclothed state but the clothed state (spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5), when we shall have our house which is from heaven - glorified saints in the glory with Christ.

There are not many express statements in Scripture on this subject, but there are enough that bear on it that we should be in no doubt. Perhaps one of the causes of lack of understanding is the supposition that the saints in glorified bodies will be lost in one indistinguishable throng, that all the redeemed will look alike and be alike. A little consideration will dissolve this misconception, for even in this world (which we all recognize as greatly inferior to the heavenly scene) there is an infinite variety without duplication. No two people look or act exactly alike, no fingerprints are alike, not in all the millions that the United States Bureau of Investigation has on file, not even in "identical twins." Some such cases have been claimed to exist, but when examined carefully they were shown to differ. Those who have studied the blades of grass, the leaves of the trees, and the snowflakes, tell us the same variation is true. When man makes pins, needles, or other objects, they come out uniformly the same.

Since, then, this creation is stamped by such infinite variety and lack of duplication, why should one suppose that the heavenly scene, "that which is perfect," will be otherwise? The deduction is unavoidable that there will be the same distinctions and personalities evidenced when we in bodies of glory will be with Christ. The "spiritual body" is not going to lack the distinctive individuality that has been in the "natural body." The chapter from which this last statement is quoted calls attention to various glories, even to saying "one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41). How could we suppose that the glorified body - the "spiritual body" - will lack personal identity which this body of our humiliation has possessed?

Were not Moses and Elijah distinguishable when displayed in the glory with Christ on the transfiguration mount? Was this only a mirage? an illusion? No, for Peter says, "we... were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16), whereby we had the Old Testament prophecy confirmed to us. Moses and Elijah were not phantoms, but the actual men who talked with Jesus and "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). They represent the heavenly side of the coming glory, just as Peter, James, and John in natural bodies portrayed the earthly side of the kingdom. Furthermore, Moses and Elijah were not angels, nor did they appear as angels, for "there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias." Another point to discover here is that even those in natural bodies - Peter, James, and John - needed no

introduction to those in glorified bodies, although they had never seen them on earth.

Another scripture which confirms the thought that we will know one another in heaven is found in 1 Thessalonians 2: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." vv. 19,20. Not only will the Apostle Paul know those Thessalonian believers in the glory, and they know him, but they are to be manifestly his joy and crown of rejoicing. They will be there as the evident trophies of Paul's labors at Thessalonica. And if this is true of the saints at Thessalonica, is it not to be true of all the saints who were saved through Paul's labors? Why should only the saints in one locality be singled out for this place? Surely it will be so in all of Paul's labors, and if of Paul, why not of all the saints who have labored and seen souls saved through their ministry? Is there not a similar thought in John's second epistle, where he says, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward"? v. 8. John is speaking of his labors, and he hoped this "elect lady" would go on in the truth as he had taught her, so that he might have a full reward.

This brings us to another point: what about the judgment seat of Christ where all the saints in glory will have their works reviewed by Him who knew and understood all the thoughts, motives, and deeds. We are very poor judges of our own doings, but there is One who knows the thoughts and intents of the hearts. We are to be manifested before Him when we are with and like Christ. The Lord whom we serve is going to reward each one of us according to His perfect wisdom and love. If there is no distinct personality of the saints, who is there to reward? Furthermore, there will be rewards that will be bestowed in common with other believers. This would necessitate the knowledge of each other.

There will be rewards that will be distinctly personal and individual, as with the stone in which there will be a new name which no one will know but the one receiving it (Rev. 2:17). This will be for some personal devotedness to Christ that no one else knew of, and it will receive His private commendation - a beautiful thing to anticipate as something personal between the individual and the Lord. But then there are those who will be made pillars in that day, that is, something that stands out for all to see. Surely the rewards will be commensurate with the devotedness to the Lord, and according to the trials that made it difficult. And in Rev. 3:8, 9 the Lord commends some who in great weakness held fast to His Word and did not deny His name. He says to these, "I will make them to come and worship before Thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Has this taken place yet? Will there not be a public acknowledgment of His approval of those who were faithful in the "day of small things," even though they were despised at the time by others? He is to make it plainly evident that they had His approval. There is a similar thought in the last book of the Old Testament - Malachi. The Lord had a special record made of those who feared Him and thought upon His name in the day of ruin. He says of them, "They shall be Mine... in that day when I make up My jewels." Then it will be seen who pleased God and who did not.

Another side to the judgment seat of Christ must also be considered. There are, sad to say, injustices and evil acts of Christians toward fellow believers now in this world, many of which have never been cleared or settled, nor will they be short of the coming judgment seat when all of our deeds pass in review before Him. Will there be no redress of such injuries? Will the Lord not make it manifest what He saw and what He knew of the motives which were at work? We will all be

happy to have these things cleared away then, for there will be no flesh in any of us. But how could all this take place if the saints in glory were one indistinguishable throng? After the rapture, and, we take it, before the marriage of the Lamb, everything that could possibly sully one atom of glory will have been judged and cleared in His presence. In the light of this, how important it is to judge ourselves now before Him, and to walk with a pure conscience day by day!

It is sad to witness some Christians being involved in quarrels with other Christians and being willing to say, This will have to be settled at the judgment seat of Christ. Should we not judge it before the Lord NOW and, where necessary, before our brethren too, and, if it should be done, make restitution now? It is a solemn thing for Christians to allow difficulties with other Christians which remain unresolved until the day of Christ.

When that which is perfect is come, then we shall know also as we are known (1 Cor. 13:10, 12). We can little comprehend the wonders of those scenes into which we are soon to enter. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." 1 Cor. 2:9.

Was it only for the Israelites that God said, as the end of the wilderness came into view: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness"? Deut. 8:2. Is there not an application for us as we too near the end of the wilderness journey? Shall we not review all His ways with us? and shall they not magnify His grace and His goodness? Surely we can sing with the poet:

"I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land."

When we behold how His grace cared for us, and brought us safely to Himself, in spite of all our failures, we shall praise Him as we would.

The story has been told of the eccentric preacher of old, Rowland Hill (of "The Three Biddens" fame), who was one day asked by his wife, "Rowland, do you think we will know each other in heaven?" He replied tersely, "Do you think we will be bigger fools there than we are here?"

Surely we await the coming of "that which is perfect."

"We look to meet our brethren
From ev'ry distant shore;
Not one will seem a stranger,
Though never seen before.
With angel hosts attending,
In myriads through the sky,

Yet 'midst them all,

Thou only,

O Lord, wilt fix the eye."

The Silver Trumpet

Numbers 10

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow with but one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance forever throughout your generations. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God." vv. 1-10.

We have quoted this entire interesting passage for the reader in order that he may have before him, in the veritable language of inspiration, the lovely institution of the silver trumpet. It comes in with striking fitness immediately after the instructions respecting the movement of the cloud, and is bound up in a marked way with the entire history of Israel, not only in the past, but also in the future. The sound of the trumpet was familiar to every circumcised ear. It was also the communication of the mind of God in a form distinct and simple enough to be heard and understood by every member of the congregation, however distant he might be from the source where the testimony emanated. God took care that each one in that vast assembly, however far away, should hear the silvery tones of the trumpet of testimony.

The two trumpets were made of one piece, and they fulfilled a double purpose. In other words, the source of the testimony was one, however the object and result might vary. Every movement in the camp was to be the result of the sound of the trumpet. Was the congregation to be gathered in festive joy and worship? It was by a certain sound of the trumpet. Were the tribes to be gathered in hostile array? It was by a blast of the trumpet. The solemn assembly and the warlike host - the instruments of music and the weapons of war - all were regulated by the silver trumpet. Any movement, whether festive, religious, or hostile, that was not the result of that familiar sound, would only be the fruit of a restless and unsubdued will which Jehovah could by no means sanction. The pilgrim host in the wilderness was as dependent upon the sound of the trumpet as upon the movement of the cloud. The testimony of God, communicated in that particular manner, was to govern every movement throughout the many thousands of Israel. Moreover, the sons of

Aaron, the priests, were responsible to blow with the trumpets, for the mind of God can only be known and communicated in priestly nearness and communion. It was the high and holy privilege of the priestly family to cluster around the sanctuary of God, there to catch the first movement of the cloud, and communicate the same to the most distant part of the camp. They were responsible to give a certain sound, and every member of the militant host was equally responsible to yield a ready and an implicit obedience. It would have been at once positive rebellion for any to attempt to move without the word of command, or to refuse to move whenever that word was given. All had to wait upon that divine testimony, and walk in the light of it the very moment it was given. To move without the testimony would be to move in the dark; to refuse to move when the testimony was given, would be to remain in the dark.

This is most simple and deeply practical. We can have no difficulty in seeing its force and application in the case of the congregation in the wilderness. But let us remember that all this was a type, and further, that it was written for our learning. We are solemnly bound, therefore, to look into it; we are imperatively called upon to seek to gather up and treasure up the great practical instruction contained in the singularly beautiful ordinance of the silver trumpet. Nothing could be more seasonable for the present moment. It teaches a lesson to which the Christian reader should give his most profound attention. It sets forth in the most distinct manner possible that God's people are to be absolutely dependent upon and wholly subject to divine testimony in all their movements. A child may read this in the type before us. The congregation in the wilderness dared not assemble for any festive or religious object until they heard the sound of the trumpet, nor could the men of war buckle on their armor till summoned forth by the signal of alarm to meet the uncircumcised foe. They worshiped and they fought, they journeyed and they rested, in simple obedience to the trumpet call. It was not by any means a question of their likes or dislikes, their thoughts, their opinions, or their judgment. It was simply and entirely a question of implicit obedience. Their every movement was dependent upon the testimony of God as given by the priests from the sanctuary. The song of the worshiper and the shout of the warrior were each the simple fruit of the testimony of God.

How beautiful! How striking! How instructive! And let us add, How deeply practical! Why do we dwell upon it? Because we firmly believe it contains a needed lesson for the day in which our lot is cast. If there is one feature more characteristic than another of the present hour, it is insubjection to divine authority - positive resistance of the truth when it demands unqualified obedience and self-surrender. It is all well enough so long as it is truth setting forth with divine fullness and clearness our pardon, our acceptance, our life, our righteousness, our eternal security in Christ. This will be listened to and delighted in. But the very moment it becomes a question of the claim and authority of that blessed One who gave His life to save us from the flames of hell and to impart to us the everlasting joys of heaven, all manner of difficulties are started; all sorts of reasonings and questions are raised; clouds of prejudice gather around the soul and darken the understanding. The sharp edge of truth is blunted or turned aside in a thousand ways. There is no waiting for the sound of the trumpet, and when it sounds with a blast as clear as God Himself can give, there is no response to the summons. We move when we ought to be still, and we halt when we ought to be moving.

What must be the result of this? Either no progress at all, or progress in a wrong direction, which is worse than none. It is utterly impossible that we can advance in the divine life unless we yield

ourselves without reserve to the word of the Lord. We may be saved through the rich aboundings of divine mercy and through the atoning virtues of the Savior's blood, but shall we rest satisfied with being saved by Christ, and not seek in some feeble measure to walk with Him and live for Him? Shall we accept salvation through the work which He has wrought, and not long after deeper intimacy of communion with Himself, and complete subjection to His authority in all things? How would it have been with Israel in the wilderness had they refused attention to the sound of the trumpet? We can see it at a glance. If, for example, they had presumed at any time to assemble for a festive or religious object without the divinely appointed summons, what would have been the result? Or further, if they had taken it upon themselves to move forward on their journey, or go forth to war, before the trumpet had sounded an alarm, how would it have been? Or, finally, if they had refused to move when called by the sound of the trumpet, either to the solemn assembly, the onward march, or to the battle, how would they have fared?

The answer is plain. Let us ponder it. It has a solemn lesson for us. Let us apply our hearts to it. The silver trumpet settled and ordered every movement for Israel of old. The testimony of God ought to settle and order everything for the Church now. The silver trumpet was blown by the priests of old. That testimony of God is known in priestly communion now. A Christian has no right to move or act apart from the divine testimony. He must wait upon the word of his Lord. Until he gets that, he must stand still. When he has gotten it, he must go forward. God can and does communicate His mind to His people now, just as distinctly as He did to His people of old. True, it is not now by the sound of the trumpet or by the movement of a cloud, but by His Word and Spirit. It is not by anything that strikes the senses that our Father guides us, but by that which acts on the heart, the conscience, and the understanding. It is not by that which is natural, but by that which is spiritual, that He communicates His mind.

But let us be well assured of this, that our God can and does give our hearts full certainty both as to what we should do and what we should not do - as to where we should go and where we should not go. It seems strange to be obliged to insist upon this - exceedingly strange that any Christian should doubt, much less, deny it. And yet so it is. We are often in doubt and perplexity, and there are some who are ready to deny that there can be any such thing as certainty as to the details of daily life and action. This surely is wrong. Cannot an earthly father communicate his mind to his child as to the most minute particulars of his conduct? And cannot our Father communicate His mind to us as to all our ways from day to day? Unquestionably He can, and let not the Christian reader be robbed of the holy privilege of knowing his Father's mind in reference to any circumstance of his daily life.

Are we to suppose for a moment that the Church of God is worse off in the matter of guidance than the camp in the desert? Impossible. How is it then that one often finds Christians at a loss as to their movements? It must be owing to the lack of a circumcised ear to hear the sound of the silver trumpet, and of a subject will to yield a response to the sound.

The beautiful institution of the silver trumpet, is not confined in its application to Israel in the wilderness, but is bound up with their entire history right onward to the end. Thus we have the feast of trumpets - the trumpet of jubilee, the blowing of trumpets over their sacrifices - upon which we do not now dwell, as our immediate object is to help us to seize the grand idea presented in the opening paragraph of our article. May the Holy Spirit impress upon our hearts the needed lesson

of "The Silver Trumpet."

Simply Clinging

"He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Mark 10:16.

This is what He does where there is no conscious strength, but simple clinging. It is more than turning to His power or His mercy; it is simple repose in the arms of Christ. It just lies there, and has the satisfaction of being taken care of. Here then I get confidence. I feel that I simply could not do without the Lord. Is it not pleasant for the heart to be able thus to delight in God? - to be able to say: I am a poor creature, without means, but He has taken me up in His arms and laid His hands upon me; whereas, if I were a man of great natural resources, perhaps I should find it very difficult to give up everything for Christ.

As Sorrowful, yet Always Rejoicing

If trouble and care will try to force themselves upon us, we have nothing to do or say to them, but cast them all upon Him who "careth" for us, and is the Master of them. Our only business here for God is to glorify Him in every step of the path His grace has marked out for us. Christ is for us in heaven (Heb. 9:24), and we are for Him down here (John 17:18), so that come what may, we should rejoice and be able to say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Matt. 11:26.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." S. of Sol. 4:16. Blow hot or blow cold, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

"Clouds may seem to pass between us, There's no change in Him above."

Why then are we cast down, when we are afflicted and tried? "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Luke 24:38. Jesus knows and feels your smallest woe. So very precious are you to Him that even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. What affects you, affects Him, for you are bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh.

"Sorrow overmuch is suicide of the heart, and buries a man with his head downward." Over-anxiety about one trouble can mask our appreciation of hundreds of mercies. Rise up then beloved, from your despondency; emerge from the dark shadow; do no more dishonor to your Lord, and let your heart be as the fountain in the midst of the desert, that the weary traveler may be refreshed even at the sight of you. We are responsible to God to refresh and cheer each other, and to comfort one another with the comfort we have of God; it is a work and a witness for Him in the midst of a joyless and thankless world.

As one has said, "If the east wind will blow, put up another button on your coat"; brave the wave of trial as one who, in the strength of the Lord, is more than a match for it. "Be strong, yea, be strong." God is for you, with you, and in you. You may be in the furnace; the only loss you will sustain will be your bands, and in company with you will be the "Son of God." You may not be able to say, much less do, anything. Weakness has a special claim upon God and God has a special blessing for it. "Them that honor Me I will honor." We honor God by patiently enduring. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God." Give place to care and it will soon prove to be your master, and you its slave.

It has been remarked that "like the disagreeable saint, the gloomy saint is an anomaly in grace." What a sad spectacle is a child of God who makes the young feel old, the old feel older, and the sad feel sadder. Some hearts are full of false sentiment and morbid feeling; they appear to shrink from being happy, and prefer being miserable; others are afraid of being happy, as if God grudged His children happiness. Instead of leaving all things in the keeping of their loving God, they darken the present with the shadows of the future, and suffer the many sorrows of unbelief. They forget that the more they "joy in God," the more cause for joy He will give them, and that the more they praise Him, the more they glorify Him.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4:4. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:6, 7.

While we retain the love of God in our hearts, there is room for nothing else but His peace. A heart full of Christ is a heart full of joy - not my own, but His. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:11. Let His joy rule in your hearts, and be "a ray of sunshine in a shady place."

A wise man has said, "Be what we may, and we cannot be worse than we are, nothing in or about us ought to be allowed to interrupt the calmness of conscious victory, or to hinder our power of enjoyment of what Christ is made of God unto us (1 Cor. 1:30), and of what God has made us to be in Him" (Col. 2:10; Eph. 1:6). The enemy may accuse and conscience may charge, but nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God; we are what we are as created in Christ Jesus, so "that neither death, nor life" need cause one moment's dismay (read Rom. 8:31-39). Everything may appear to be against us, but God is for us, and we are here for Him. "Ye are of God, little children" (1 John 4:4), and He has created and filled our hearts to beat for and to Himself, that His own joy might flow into and out of them. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. God has created our bodies to place His treasure in. to show to men and angels that His power is in us as well as for us. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13. And His only pleasure is to see us occupied with and enjoying the Son of His love. If we suffer, it is for Him; if we rejoice, it is for Him; if we bear pain, it is for Him; all we do and say is for Him, because we are for Him, as well as of Him, and He is for us. Remember, Christ in you, you in Christ, and Christ in God, so that come what may, we can afford to lift up the head as those who have a right to be happy, and sing:

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.

Spiritual Understanding

There is no advantage greater for the enemy, short of destroying the foundations, than the mixing up of the saints of God with the world, and the consequent darkening. of all spiritual intelligence in those who ought to be its light. God would have us in practical communion with Himself; in His light we see light. If we see the end of all the plots of Satan to thwart the work of God, it separates us from what leads thereto, and joins us with all that is dear to Him. Then "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." So walking, we shall understand the Word of God. It is not a question of intellectual capacity and learning. I am confident that human erudition in the things of God is only so much rubbish, wherever it is made to be anything more than a servant. Unless Christians can keep what they know under their feet, they are incapable of profiting fully by the Word of God. Otherwise, whether a man knows much or little, he becomes its slave, and it usurps the place of the Spirit of God. Faith is the sole means and power of spiritual understanding, and faith puts and keeps us in subjection to the Lord, and in separation from this evil age.

Be Still, My Soul

"The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness." Isa.32:17.

"Be still, my soul! thy God doth undertake

To guide the future as He has the past.

Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake.

All now mysterious shall be bright at last.

"Be still, my soul! the waves and winds still know

His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul! when dearest friends depart,

And all is darkened in the vale of tears;

Then thou shalt better know His love, His heart,

Who comes to soothe thy sorrows and thy fears.

Be still, my soul! the Saviour can repay

From His own fullness, all He takes away."

Prince of Peace, control my will; bid this struggling heart be still;

Bid my fears and doubtings cease; hush my spirit into peace.

The Subtle Enemy

Several points seem to me to mark the presence and influence of the enemy in general.

The first sign of weakness is the gathering becoming the object of attention, instead of there being a people enjoying the blessedness of their position by the relationship and fellowship it gave them with Christ, who had become and _was their abiding object, revealing withal God the Father.

But I would speak with more detail, for this is rather the occasion of Satan's power than the fruit of it as a positive word. Where this last is, you will find holy spiritual affections broken and set aside to give place to the claim of the institution. And so are even natural affections, whilst the latter are given all their natural force and weight in practice to hold persons in the institution, and even largely used for this purpose.

In the same manner people are won and brought under the influence that acts there by them. The activity and zeal will be for the system. It will be to make proselytes, and establish them in what will keep them there, not to save souls or lead them on in Christ. There will generally be a good deal of acting against or depreciation of others who even hold the faith of Christ.

Paramount importance will be attached to the views which distinguish that institution, not to what saves or to what brings faith to the test by the revelation of Christ.

Good works will be found generally much pressed, and that in a systematic way in which it works for and into the system. Truthfulness will ever be wanting. This I have always found where the work of the enemy is.

Connected with this is the pressing much certain doctrines, when it is safe, which form the bond of the institution, and denying them in the alleged meaning, or explaining them away, when they are pressed on them by those who detect the evil. This anyone conversant with the subject must have noticed.

The denial of the doctrine positively stated where the influence exists, as held in any such sense or its explanation, is the very thing that marks the power of evil. With this will be found the attributing to those who hold the truth, every kind of doctrine they abhor, where there is influence enough to have their statements believed.

Succession

The Lord's coming is what is always put before the believer as a present hope and for this reason there is no provision for official succession. "I come quickly" is the language of Him who orders the Church. Here there is no time or future in the thought of God to suggest any need for succession. In the old Jewish economy it was contemplated but not now in this day of grace.

As to the two statements "the latter times," and "the last days," they are looked at in a moral way as always being present and the churches are addressed as about to meet their Lord upon His return.

There is, of course, a provision in a moral way to have order in the Church but not in appointed offices through official succession. "If any one aspires to exercise oversight, he desires a good work." 1 Tim. 3:1 J.N.D. Trans. Notice that it says, "any one." Then the moral qualifications that are necessary to fill the need of that service follow. The same applies also to deacons. So we see the way that grace today and all through each generation meets the needs of the Church in a moral exercise of souls and not in any officially appointed way.

What was prophesied to succeed the apostles we find in Acts 20:29-30. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This was sadly true and is still true. However, each generation in its day has had those godly men raised up to meet their need and it is still so. In Heb. 13:7 we read: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." This refers to those dear faithful servants who have gone on but we remember the Word of God that they ministered to us.

A little farther on it says: "Obey them that have the rule [are the guides] over you, and submit yourselves." These are those in our generation who are serving according to their moral capacity and devotion to God and His Word.

Paul commends the brethren in Acts 20 to God and Word of His grace. These always remain to guide us.

The Supper at Bethany

The account of our blessed Lord's anointing in the house of Simon the leper has been often before us. The incident, however, never loses its interest. It has a peculiar charm attached to it by Christ Himself, who declared that wherever the glad tidings were preached in the whole world, the fact of the broken alabaster box should be proclaimed.

There is a peculiar charm too in the narrative of the last days of our Lord's life; the shadow of death was to be seen closing around Him. I say, "was to be seen," but it needed a spiritual eyesight, and that eyesight could only be procured from Him to discern clearly the approach of His death. All the malice of the scribes and elders of the people was aroused; Judas was near, full of perfidy; Caiaphas had pronounced the fatal word, yet more was needed for a right apprehension of what was about to take place.

They made a supper for Jesus in Bethany. A supper always represents, symbolically, a quiet period of repose after one of work. It was the last meal in the day; the rest at the end is always gratifying.

This was a respite for the lonely Stranger. While the hatred of the Jews was becoming more violent every day, and Jerusalem more and more hostile to the Messiah, a few obscure believers made a supper in Bethany for Him whom they loved.

It has often been remarked that Martha, Lazarus, and Mary, on this occasion, form a beautiful picture of the faithful remnant in Israel - a nucleus of believers in the midst of an unbelieving people.

The risen Lazarus gives a peculiar character to the little company. I often ask myself what we should say if we met with a man literally dead and risen. We speak much of death and resurrection, but I fear we do not understand much about it.

But not one of us can doubt that Mary was in advance of the others. There was a depth of interest, a work in the soul that was properly divine. It would seem at first sight almost too bold an act in the quiet, attentive Mary, yet there was no effrontery in it. The right moment had come to break the alabaster box and to pour out all the spikenard at once!

I have often imagined the consternation of Judas Iscariot, but it was not only the heartless thief who was troubled. There seems to have been a general impression that there was wanton waste; the astonishment on all sides was great, and the disapprobation general.

Yet the poor woman was accomplishing the one intelligent act of service toward our Lord in all that time. It was a question of deep spiritual instinct; death, someone has said, was in the air, according to her view. She saw what others failed to see, because her love to the Lord made her spiritual eyesight so keen that His death was there before her.

The other disciples who were present seem to have misunderstood the action. It was not that they did not love the Lord; they must have felt, too, the danger to which He was exposed, but the deep sense of the solemnity of the moment was wanting. For the one who was taught of God, the one absorbing desire was to act in sympathy with Christ who was about to die, and to answer to His deep feelings at that time.

Everything else became secondary to this; even the privilege of helping the poor was not so important. "Ye have the poor with you always," said the Lord, "but Me ye have not always."

And now let us ask, What is the meaning of this incident? What are we to learn by it? We are to try to please our blessed Lord by answering to His present wish, and by being in the secret of His present thoughts.

It is not given to all, no doubt, to break alabaster boxes of precious nard. I fear that there is not much danger of our going too far in this way. Yet the desire of our hearts should surely be to answer to our Lord's place and thoughts in the present moment, and to have His approbation.

Let Judas Iscariot and all who may admire his

reflections say what they will, there are certain sacrifices of present advantage to be made which are according to the mind of Christ, and it is for us to be near enough to Him to make them at the right moment. -

Such a spirit is not that of mere impulse and fanaticism. There was a deliberate purpose in Mary's conduct when all the ointment was poured out, and there will be a calm sense of the Lord's approval in every true act of service in which His place as the rejected and crucified Savior is owned before men.

The house was full of the odor of the spikenard, and the Lord's thoughts as to the offering were very different from those of all the bystanders.

May He give us grace to answer to His present wishes!

The Table of Showbread

Exod. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9

Three articles only were found in the holy place of the tabernacle which was the scene of the customary service of the priests. These were the table of showbread, the candlestick, and the golden altar of incense. All were made with a special object in view, and therefore, each possesses its own distinct typical significance. As the Lord may enable us, we propose to discuss the table of showbread in this paper.

First, the composition of the table demands our attention. It was made of shittim wood and overlaid with pure gold (Exod. 25:23-25). The shittim wood is a type of what is human, and gold, as ever, is an emblem of what is divine. Hence we have here presented to us a figure of Christ in His human and divine natures as combined in His Person. As to the material therefore, there is entire correspondence with the ark which is also a symbol of the Person of our Lord.

Next, we consider the bread on the table. It is in the passage from Leviticus that we find the particulars of the loaves. "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto Him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute." Lev. 24:5-9.

1) The loaves or cakes were made of fine flour. This at once points to the meat offering which in like manner was made of fine flour, with the addition of oil and frankincense. (See Lev. 2.) No leaven is mentioned, whereas in the two wave loaves (Lev. 23:17) leaven is expressly specified, for the obvious reason that, in this case, the loaves represent the Church, and therefore leaven - emblem of evil - is found in them. But the fine flour is a type of the humanity of Christ, and hence the loaves of the showbread are without leaven, since He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and absolutely without sin. 2) The loaves were baked. They set forth, therefore, Christ as having been exposed to the action of fire - the judgment of God's holiness by which He was searched and tested when upon the cross, and found to answer, and to answer perfectly, its every claim. 3) They were twelve in number - six in a row. So on the shoulders of the high priest there were the names of six tribes on the one, and the names of six tribes on the other. The loaves equally point to the twelve tribes of Israel. The number twelve signifies administrative perfection of government in man, and hence there were twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates, and twelve foundations in the holy city, new Jerusalem. The twelve loaves may then be taken to represent Israel in its twelve tribes, and this will give us, in connection with the significance of the number twelve, God revealed in Christ in association with Israel (for Christ was of the seed of David, and heir to his throne - Luke 1:32) in perfection of government. This will be displayed according to the predictions of the prophets (for example, Psalm 72) in the millennium. But the loaves were on the

table, and hence, on the other hand, Israel is seen in association with Christ before God. 4) Another thing should be noticed. "And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord." Lev. 24:7. The frankincense typifies the sweet fragrance of Christ to God. Observe, therefore, that Israel in its twelve tribes is ever presented before God, covered with all the fragrance of Christ, and maintained there through all the night of their unbelief in virtue of what He is and has done - the sure promise of their future restoration and blessing. Hence the loaves were to be set in order "before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant." Lev. 24:8. They may be unfaithful, as they have been, but God cannot deny Himself; He abides faithful and, as a consequence, though they have been scattered throughout the world because of their unbelief, He will yet perform His counsels of mercy and truth, and gather them from the four corners of the earth, and reinstate them in their own land in fullness of blessing - blessing which will be established in and secured by Him who is symbolized by the showbread table.

An illustration of this may be gathered from the border of the table: "And thou shalt make unto it a border of a handbreadth round about." Exod. 25:25. It is very clear that the object of this border was to maintain, the loaves in their position, and if the ornamental crown of gold be taken as an emblem of the divine glory of Christ, the lesson taught will be that Israel is secure in its position in Christ before God by all that He is as divine; His divine glory is concerned in their maintenance in it, as well as in preserving them for all the blessing which He Himself has secured, and on which they will therefore one day surely enter. But there is more than Israel's position in this symbol. It embraces in principle that of every believer. There in the holy place ever before the eye of God, covered with the grateful fragrance of the frankincense, he is seen in Christ. It is indeed the perfect presentation of the believer to God. In other words, it is our acceptance in the Beloved.

We may now consider the bread as food for the priest. "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute." Lev. 24:9. Feeding indicates identification and communion with the thing fed upon. This is expressly brought out by the Apostle Paul in his teaching concerning the Lord's table. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. 10:16, 17. It was the same with the priests. For example, they ate also of the sin offering in certain cases (Lev. 6:26) and thereby identified themselves with it. Feeding therefore upon the showbread is a symbol of the fact that Christ, as the Priest, ever identifies Himself with Israel before God. It was only to be eaten, it will be remarked, in the holy place. It is then Christ, in communion with the thoughts of God, identifying Himself with the twelve tribes in the exercise of His priesthood. This brings before us a very blessed aspect of truth. All will admit that He is the High Priest of this dispensation, but it is not sufficiently borne in mind that, notwithstanding Israel's unbelief, He identifies Himself in His priestly office with them before God, and that He will come out of the holiest into which He has entered as Melchizedek, and be a priest upon His throne over a willing people.

"The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Psalm 110:2-4.

Then we have the provision for the journey: "And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them." Exod. 25:26-28. The children of Israel were pilgrims in the wilderness, and hence the tabernacle and all its furniture were made for them in this character, and accompanied them in all their wanderings. Christ is ever with His people, and the very rings and staves, equally with the table itself, composed of gold and shittim wood, point to Him as the God-man. But it is in the book of Numbers that the details for the transport of the table when on the march are given. "And upon the table of showbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: and they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof." Numb. 4:7, 8. The inner covering, it will be observed, is a cloth of blue - symbol of what is heavenly; next, a cloth of scarlet - scarlet being an emblem of human glory or Jewish royalty; and outside came the covering of badgers' skins - a type of protection from evil. Regarding the whole, when we see the table with its showbread, as Christ in association with Israel, to be hereafter displayed in perfection of administrative government, the meaning of this arrangement will be apparent. The cloth of blue was immediately upon the gold; that is, the heavenly character of Christ was in intimate association with what He was as divine. The scarlet next - royalty, or human glory, because being in the wilderness, the time for its manifestation had not yet arrived. That will be connected with the kingdom at His appearing. The badgers' skins therefore are outside, as concealing His human or royal glory, and are expressive of that holy vigilance which guarded Him on every hand from evil while in wilderness circumstances.

All the vessels connected with the table were made of gold, all significant of that which was divine as befitted the service of the One who was really God manifest in flesh, and who will be confessed in the future day of Israel's blessing as their Lord and their God. It will thus be seen that every detail, as well as the whole table, speaks of Christ. May our eyes be opened to perceive every aspect of His Person and work as presented to us by the Spirit of God.

That I May Win Christ

Paul's desire was expressed in these words: "That I may win Christ." Was he not already a believer? Yes, but he looks on to the time when he should be with Him,

and enjoy His presence in glory with Him. "Not having mine own righteousness," etc. This was a strange expression from one who, "touching the righteousness which is in the law," was "blameless." But this was of his own working out. All he wanted now was Christ.

"The power of His resurrection." The religion of today starts with the incarnation - Paul begins with His death, and with the resurrection glory of the One who has passed out of this scene altogether. "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of [rather,

from] the dead." He looked through the long vista to the time when he should be in his glorified body with Him; that is what he means by winning Christ.

Three Widows of Luke's Gospel

In the Lord's absence He makes known to us His support according as we feel His absence. If the Bridegroom be absent, what can the children of the bridechamber do but fast? What else is their true and befitting attitude in the day in which He is thus, in one sense, taken away from them? If we realized this position of ours better, and felt more the absence of our Lord, we should more easily and happily ally ourselves to that which causes His absence - to His death. His death on the one hand is the climax of His rejection from the earth, on the other hand it is the portal to us of life and glory. And it is according as we enter into the one, that we practically learn the other. It is as we realize the desolation here, which He so deeply tasted of, and which His absence entails on us, that we know the blessing and deliverance which He has secured for us.

There are three orders of desolation, or widowhood, presented to us in the Gospel of Luke. The first (chap. 7:11-16) is found at Nain (by interpretation, "beautiful"). The world in itself is beautiful, but at the gate of the city - what a sight! A young man dead - the only son of his mother - and she a widow! To her, however beautiful the place, all hope and light had departed from it. Not only widowed, but bereaved of her only son, her last link is severed; the desolation is complete. But what is the resource to her, or to one now similarly desolate? It is Christ, known in resurrection power, and the very fact of her desolation gives occasion to this knowledge of Him. If she had not been so desolate, she would not have known Him thus; how could she? Her widowhood, her desolation, becomes a gain to her, for she thereby learns the resources that are in Him. To be a widow of this order, is to be with Christ and to know His succor. But unless we take our place as such, we shall not know Him thus. Abraham took his place in power when he offered up Isaac. Jacob took it when, on his deathbed, he turns for a moment from the earthly prospects of others to the spot where his own were buried, and says, "As for me... Rachel died by me... and I buried her... in the way of Ephrath." Gen. 48:7. Let the occasion be what it may, whatever brings us into real widowhood, brings us into blessing and likeness to Christ, for it is there that we take His yoke upon us and learn of Him.

The next order of widowhood we find in chapter 18. Here the desolate one is not even left unmolested. Great as is her desolation and inability to help herself, still she is not without an adversary, and power is in his hand. So that is not simple desolation, as is that of the first order. But here is one crushed already and an enemy at hand wielding his power against her. But what is the resource here? "Shall not God avenge His own elect?" We are to pray and not to faint. David at Ziklag was in such a position as this (1 Sam. 30). Widowed of everything, he was also in danger of the adversary; but he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." And the greater his sense of desolation, the greater was his sense afterward of God's succor to him and the avenging of his enemies.

The third order is in chapter 21, and there it is the highest order. The widow answers to her calling; she is spending her all for the testimony of God. It is but two mites, and she might, one would say, have spent them, or one of them, on herself, but no, she will spend it on the temple - the structure

of testimony for God on the earth. She is a real widow, and that in the highest sense, for she is not only without expectation, but she had so far forgotten herself, that the little possession left to her she will not spend on herself; her heart being in the circle of God's interests, she will give it to Him, and that without fear, but in simple and happy devotion to His interests on the earth which has no other interest for her. Paul in Philippians is a widow of this order - in prison - without an interest in anything here but what was for Christ's glory. He would spend his all on that. To him, to live was Christ.

Transfiguration

Matt. 17:1-9

In the midst of His service of humiliation, our Lord was transfigured for a short time. It was not like Moses whose face shone from his nearness to the divine Presence. Our Lord was with His own here below. A week before, He prepared them for seeing the Son of man coming in His kingdom. After it, He takes with Him Peter, James, and John, and brings them up into a high mountain apart. "And His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him." It is a miniature of His kingdom wherein will be the risen and changed saints, with others in their natural bodies, and the Lord the center of all.

It would seem that the divine aim of having Moses and Elijah there was to mark the surpassing glory of the Lord before whom the chief representative of the law and the most honored of the prophets gave place and vanished away. The personal glory of Jesus is most conspicuous, as elsewhere in this gospel. He is Son of God and Son of man.

Peter counted it a great thing to see his Master with saints so renowned and glorious. "Lord," said he to Jesus, "it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He made the natural but grave mistake of equalizing all three. Yet he who had only so short a time before confessed his Master to be not only the Messiah, but the Son of the living God, ought not to have so erred. It is so easy to forget what flesh and blood never truly knows, that which is revealed by the Father; then, too, he could not bear to think of His going to Jerusalem, suffering many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and being killed, but raised the third day.

Here it was not the withering rebuke of the Lord who knew that all blessing for man and glory for God, in a ruined world, hung on His rejection (Matt. 16:21-23). It was the Father's voice out of the excellent glory. "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." The Father then displayed His jealousy for the honor of His Son. He would not allow the lawgiver or the law restorer to be put on such a level. They were servants and to be honored in the place He set them. But His beloved Son! - there were His delights. And if Christ went down in love to suffer as man, and as man to be exalted, the glory of the eternal Son was precious beyond all thought of man in His Father's eyes.

It is the Son whom we are to hear. See how the great truth is attested in the epistle to the Hebrews, both in chapter 1:2, and in chapter 12:25. Equally explicit is John 5:25 for quickening, and John 10 for every day - and not only for the sheep led out of the Jewish fold, but for other sheep, Gentiles, not of this fold.

When the disciples heard the Father's voice, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. They were still far from knowing His love, but He, who brought it in His own Person, was at hand to

strengthen their hearts. "And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid." Not less, now, but more does Jesus cause His word to come home in the power of redemption to those that believe. And the God who sent Him would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transformed, Transfigured, Changed: Romans 12:2

Rom. 12:2

The word translated "transformed" is found only four times in the New Testament. It is used both in Matthew and Mark to describe the change in the appearance of our blessed Lord on the mountain when "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." In these places it is rendered "transfigured." It is met with finally in 2 Cor. 3:18, where it is given as "changed." Who can doubt that there is an intended connection between these scriptures? When the Lord was "transfigured" on the mount, God showed out, in anticipation, the glorified state on which His beloved Son would enter after His death and resurrection. (See John 17:5.) But we - believers - shall by His grace be glorified together with Him (Rom. 8:17), and we learn from the above scriptures how this will be accomplished. Rom. 12:2 teaches that it is, first of all, a moral work within - a spiritual change effected by the renewing of our mind. From 2 Cor. 3:18 we gather that while Christ in glory is the model to which we are to be conformed (compare John 17:19; Rom. 8:29), it is by beholding His glory that we are gradually "transfigured" - from glory to glory - into the same image. God thus, by the Holy Spirit, uses the glory of the Lord to change us morally into the likeness of His beloved Son. But, as 1 John 3:2 tells us, we shall not be like Him until we see Him as He is. We wait, therefore, until His coming for the full accomplishment of the counsels of God, when our bodies as well as our souls will be conformed to the image of His Son (see Phil. 3:21). In the meantime our moral growth in His likeness will be in proportion to our present occupation with Him in the place where He is.

"And is it so? I shall be like Thy Son;

Is this the grace which He for me has won?

Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,

In glory, to His own blest likeness brought."

Two Night Scenes

In the first of these scenes we are introduced to the house of a woman who has a familiar spirit at Endor (1 Sam. 28:7). She is a true emissary of Satan - one who has for long carried on her diabolical deceptions by means of witchcraft, and has by some means or other escaped the raid which had been made upon such persons by Saul in his religious zeal (v. 3).

Through the darkness and gloom of that eventful night might be seen three figures moving on with hurried steps toward her abode. Silently they speed onward, lest the darkness should pass away and the morning dawn ere they accomplish their miserable and wicked purpose. How true, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light." John 3:20.

The figures, too, are worthy of notice. One at least of the three is remarkable. Though no kingly robes adorn him, and no train of followers mark out his position, yet in that tall figure, head and shoulders

above the others, disguised though he be, we perceive unmistakably Saul, the King of Israel. A look of despair is settled on his countenance. Darkness and gloom have taken up their abode in his breast. His state within answers to the state of nature around. He is on his way to consult with the witch, in the consciousness that he is given up of God.

Awful discovery! - the heart sickens at the thought - Saul given up of God! Yes, the man who had been anointed king, whose hand had slain thousands of the Lord's enemies, who had seen the wonderful intervention of Jehovah on behalf of His people in so many ways and was so familiar with His power, who in his religious zeal had put away all the wizards and witches out of the land, was now given up of God, and coming out in his true colors.

In spite of all God's tender and gracious dealings with him, in tracing his history we find he disobeys His word (chap. 15), hates and seeks to kill God's anointed (chap. 19:10), destroys God's priests (chap. 22:18), and finally, when he finds that God does not answer him, instead of falling down on his face and repenting of his wickedness, he fills up his cup of iniquity by turning from God and appealing to Satan. He turns to what he had professed to give up, like "the dog is turned to his own vomit... and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:22). Consummate wickedness, which meets its fearful but well-deserved doom!

Arriving at the woman's house, he finds a difficulty in getting her to act because of his own previous conduct, but after giving her his oath that no punishment shall happen to her, she proceeds as usual to bring up the familiar spirit. God interferes, and, to her utter amazement, Samuel appears. This opens her eyes to the fact that she is in the presence of the poor, God-deserted king.

"Why halt thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" said Samuel. Listen to the despairing answer of him who was the greatest and most favored man in Israel - "I am sore distressed... God is departed from me... therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I

shall do." v. 15.

Then from the lips of the disquieted Samuel he hears his doom - the loss of his kingdom, as the fruit of his disobedience (vv. 17,18). Besides, "To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me" (v. 19) - the loss of his life for inquiring of the witch of Endor (1 Chron. 10:13, 14).

The poor, terror-stricken king no sooner hears his doom pronounced by Samuel than he falls to the earth in a swoon; strength departs from him. As soon as he is restored and refreshed, he and his servants rise up and go their way. It is still night. Pale, haggard, and weary, the doomed king returns to his army. Next day they go to the battle, when the word of the Lord by Samuel is fulfilled. Saul is wounded by a Philistine, falls upon his sword to put an end to his miserable existence, and finally is slain by an Amalekite, one of the cursed race whom he spared when he disobeyed the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 1:14,15). That memorable night his sentence was pronounced; the next day it was executed. And Saul passed from time into eternity, numbered with the dead, according to the word of Samuel.

The next scene, though a night scene, has a freshness and charm about it which the former entirely lacks. It is not the greatest man politically, but one of the greatest men ecclesiastically, "Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" John 3:1. This time it is not the king on his way to consult with Satan, but the ruler on his way to consult with Jesus. He "came to Jesus by night," not terror-stricken and forsaken of God, but conscience-smitten and desiring to know God.

Timid and unable to rise above the thoughts of others, yet feeling the need in his soul, fearing to come by day, he steals to Jesus by night, ready to acknowledge Him as a teacher, but failing to see Him as the Savior.

No sooner does he reach Jesus and inform Him of what he does know, than Jesus begins by telling him what he does not know. "Ye must be born again." He lays the ax to the root of the tree, and levels all the pride and pretension of this ruler with one blow: "Ye must be born again."

Standing, reputation, character, are of no avail here. A new life is needed, or eternal banishment from God into the lake of fire will be his portion. New birth is indispensable, or the second death is unavoidable.

Darkness reigns around, but equal darkness reigns within the mind of the religious but inquiring Pharisee. Patiently the blessed Savior follows him in all his foolish questions, hemming him in at every point, until at last the conscience-smitten, needy, and inquiring ruler is brought to the very heart of God. Blessed terminus! Glorious station at which to alight after such a journey! From distance to nearness! From the depths of ignorance in his own heart to the spring of love, the source of blessing, in God's heart. From the midnight darkness of nature to the marvelous light in the Lord!

How marvelous the ignorance and unbelief displayed by Nicodemus (vv. 10-12)! If earthly things were disbelieved, what use was it to speak of heavenly things? Moreover, who could speak of what was in heaven, but He who had come down from heaven?

Then the mind of that great man was taken to the simplicity of the gospel in the picture of the serpent on the pole to heal the bitten Israelite in the wilderness, there to learn the truth of "life in a look." And as the serpent was lifted up, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that the dying sinner

might not perish, but have everlasting life. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. It is all of God, and from God, and goes back to God in praise and worship. God loved - God gave - we believe - and we have!

Two Shelters

Where is the Christian able to find a shelter today? Where can he find a refuge, a safe place, a protection? "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness [or as another translation reads, 'in the wicked one]." 1 John 5:19. This is the world into which every one of us is born and surely we want to pass through it safely and in peace. In the prayer of Jesus to the Father He says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John 17:16. Also He says, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (v. 15). Being so kept is what we all need and should desire for ourselves.

There are two places in this world that God has provided where this shelter from evil is found. They are the Christian home and the assembly. How very thankful we can be for these two sanctuaries and how we do enjoy being in a Christian home and also being together in the assembly!

The enemy, the wicked one, fights against these two refuges and tries to break down and destroy them. Continually he attacks the Christian home and seeks to introduce the world into that lovely place and so corrupt and ruin it. We must keep the world and worldliness out of our homes. Perhaps the best way to do this is to put God and His Word first each day of our lives. We also have the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, as our resource and of Him it says, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." 1 John 4:4.

Likewise the assembly, the church, is under the attacks of the enemy both from without and from within. We quote Acts 20:29-30, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." The resource to combat this we find in verse 32. It is God and the Word of His grace.

The Apostle John in his last two epistles has given us by the Spirit very helpful and timely instruction as a defense against the attacks upon the Christian home and upon the assembly. His second epistle to the "elect lady and her children" guards against these attacks of the enemy upon the Christian home. His third epistle to the "well-beloved Gaius" guards against the attacks of the enemy upon the church.

May we each one ever prize and use these two shelters as we have time available to be found in either one of them.

Unity

The unity of the assembly is so precious, it has such authority over the heart, that there is danger, when failure has set in, lest the desire for outward unity should induce even the faithful to accept evil and walk in fellowship with it, rather than break this unity. God therefore even in the days of the Apostles established this principle of individual faithfulness, of individual responsibility to God, and set it above all other considerations, for it has to do with the nature of God Himself, and His own authority over the conscience of the individual. God knoweth them that are His; here is the ground of confidence. I do not say who they are. And let those that name the name of Christ separate themselves from all evil. This is plain and clear and decisive. To maintain in practice the possibility of union between that Name and evil, is to blaspheme it.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1.

Unveiled Mysteries

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Much is baffling and perplexing to us in God's present dealings. "What!" we are often ready to exclaim, "could not the cup have been less bitter - the trial less severe - the road less rough and dreary?" Hush thy misgivings, says a gracious God; question not the rightness of My dispensations. Thou shalt yet see all revealed and made bright in the mirror of eternity. What I do - it is all My doing, My appointment. Thou hast but a partial view of these dealings; thou canst see naught but plans crossed and expectations laid low. But I see the end from the beginning.

"Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." Hos. 14:9.

Vitality and Freshness

In order to enjoy and retain spiritual vitality, freshness, fervor, and power, we must keep in living contact with Christ Himself and this can be done only as our minds are freshly nourished by the Holy Spirit with the truths of the Holy Scriptures.

If we study the Word with prayer, faith, and dependence, and get the knowledge of Christ in His Person, life, death, headship, and glory, we shall have the elements of vitality and freshness within our reach. This will then be manifested during the weekly remembrance. In the Lord's supper we are brought very solemnly in contact with Christ in His death. If this vitality is maintained, the desires and affections are drawn forth toward Him with an intensity of fervor and spiritual enjoyment that will lead to the happy and spontaneous outflow of thanksgiving, adoration, and praise.

Walking in Christ

The tone and spirit of our walk is an important point. Confidence in God, and gentleness of spirit, is that which becomes the saint. For this, we must be at home with God. The effect of thus walking in Christ, setting the Lord ever before us, is always to make us walk with reverence, lowliness, adoration, quietness, ease, and happiness. Because of the heart's joy in God, anxieties disappear, and it will move through the ten thousand things that would trouble and prove anxieties to another, without being troubled. No matter what it may be, we bring quietness of spirit into all circumstances while abiding in God.

What Is Inspiration?

By inspiration we mean that which is God-breathed. We are told, "All [or every] Scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. 3:16. It might be rendered, "Every scripture is God-breathed." The scriptures are therefore a revelation from God, and their force or authority to our hearts and consciences flows from that fact. If Scripture be not God's Word, it has no more value to us than the writings of good men. But it is His Word; hence it comes to us with the authority, love, wisdom, and holiness of God. Though its pages run over thousands of years, take us back before time was, and lead our thoughts on to the eternal state, and though some of the books were written more than three thousand years ago, it is unlike any other book, for it is always new. Take up an ordinary volume of human composition, written two or three hundred years ago, or even go back to one of the so-called Fathers, and you will find you have scarcely patience to read a few pages, but Scripture, as we have said, is always new. It carries with it a freshness and power to the heart and conscience that no other book does, and all the changes in the world and in mankind never affect it.

Scripture warns us against "men" and their "philosophy," ritualism and its imposing ordinances, and of putting "tradition" in the place of authority instead of Christ. While addressing itself to the heart and conscience, it always has a voice of instruction and blessing to those who believe and receive its words from the mouth of God. Those who do not believe cannot understand it, for "by faith we understand." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Psalm 25:14. And we have "joy and peace in believing." But, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14.

The Bible is the only Book that faithfully tells us what we are, and that even to the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This shows it to be divine, for only God searches the heart. It also truly reveals God, so that when the Word is received, it brings our souls into the consciousness of God's having to do with us. This also shows its divinity, for the world by wisdom knows not God (1 Cor. 1:21). The variety of aspects in which the Son who came forth from the Father to save sinners is presented to us - His personal glory, moral perfection, finished work, walk, words, ways, life, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, present offices, and future judgments and reign - as the leading truths of Scripture, give it also a divine character.

Its unity carries with it the stamp of divinity as nothing else could. The way in which the different parts are adapted to each other - types in the Old Testament having their antitypes in the New, a multitude of prophetic statements in the former having their accomplishment in the latter, and the immense number of quotations in the New from the Old Testament, to prove the soundness of the doctrines taught - combine to give it a divine character which is incontestable. It is not then surprising that an inspired writer should commend "the word" to us as if in its operations it possessed divine attributes. "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12.

There are many who, instead of bowing to Scripture as God's Word, and allowing it to judge them, sit in judgment on the things of God and thus take common ground with the infidels. Alas! such is the pride of man, that many prefer their own opinions to Scripture, and make void the Word of God so that they may keep their own tradition. Hence, also, the Word is being solemnly fulfilled in men's rejection of Holy Scripture, that "seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. 3:13.

If we have not the words of God, we have no basis for faith and must therefore be tossed about with irremediable uncertainty, but having divinely given communications, we have on their authority divinely-given certainty as to eternal salvation. By it we have present assurance, founded on the redemption work of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins are forgiven, that we have eternal life, are the children of God, and shall not come into judgment (Acts 10:43; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:1). If such are asked why they believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, and why they have such certainty as to their present and eternal blessings, their reply will be, "Because God in His Word says so, and faith needs no other authority for confidence, and no other rest for the heart and conscience."

We live in an evil and perilous time. At first heathen idolaters were chiefly those who scoffed and mocked at the Scriptures being God's own revelation of His mind; later on, avowed infidels in Christendom treated the subject with scorn and ridicule. Today, however, it is those who profess to be servants of Christ and guides of the flock of God, who are so busily engaged in undermining the eternal verity of the holy Scriptures and their divine authority. This too is seldom attempted as a whole by one person, but by different persons in various places, so that it may be, by Satan's artifice, the less manifest. At this moment there is scarcely a vital and fundamental doctrine of Scripture that is not being assailed or corrupted within the length and breadth of Christendom.

What has especially stirred many hearts at this time is the consciousness of the appalling state of souls in the neglect of the Scriptures, and the skeptical thoughts that are current among professors of Christianity as to their divine authority. Not that we imagine that we have power to lead any to see and act differently, for we are told that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." The prayer, however, of not a few, has been that God will yet work by His Word, and bless and help souls according to His own thoughts and for His own glory.

What Is Your Spirit?

"There is a spirit in man," says Job in chapter thirty-two, verse eight. This is true of every one of us. The question we desire to consider is, what spirit do we manifest and what spirit should be seen in the Christian? In the same verse Job adds, "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." How very important that we go to the inspired Word of God for the understanding that we all need!

Solomon asked for and was given by God a wise and understanding heart. (1 Kings 3:7-12.) Much of that wisdom and understanding is recorded in God's Word. In Ecclesiastes seven, he writes, "the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry." Many times the Christian is tested on these points. What spirit do we manifest? Another verse in Pro. 16:32 says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Also we see the sad opposite picture in Pro. 25:28, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." How exceedingly important it is then for each of us to have that control over our own spirit. In 1 Cor. 14:32 the word is, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." A prophet has control over his own spirit.

To His own disciples the Lord says in Luke 9:55, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." They had not yet learned the spirit of grace that the Lord Jesus had come to show all. Precious, wonderful grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17.) At the very commencement of His ministry in His own city of Nazareth it shines out clearly. He stands and reads a portion from Isaiah 61, announces the gospel and then closes the book, stopping short of the verses concerning judgment. They "bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth." So it was with Jesus all through His ministry in the gospels. In Him we have a perfect object lesson of a gracious spirit.

All of the New Testament writers (the apostles and prophets) learned something of this spirit of grace, and from the book of Luke on they have written of it for us.

In addition to the spirit of grace we learn in 2 Tim. 1:7 that, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." In this poor world it is so important for us to know and to rest in this full supply that we have in God.

It is also beautiful to see that Peter writes of an "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Pet. 3:4. As encouragement for those in fiery trials he writes in chapter 4 and verse 14, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."

What's Going on?

"Men that had understanding of the times" were found in the tribe of Issachar in the days of king David. 1 Chron. 12:32. They were the ones who knew what "Israel ought to do." Israel was God's chosen people of that time. In Deut. 7:6 we read, "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

Today, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are God's chosen people and we, too, need to have an understanding of the times and to know what we ought to do.

One of the chief purposes of writing about what is going on is to stir us up to consider how events work out God's purposes and that many things point to the near return of the Lord Jesus for His people.

Opposition to the United Nations Organization has been growing of late. The support is still large for its peace-keeping and mediation efforts but many are offended by the anti-Semitic rhetoric by which Israel is attacked. As an example at a conference of the U.N. recently about two days of the four were taken up with talking about the West Bank of the Jordan river.

The trouble the little nation of Israel causes to other nations is perhaps symbolic of a coming day that we read about in Zech. 12:3. "In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." In Zech. 2:8 the Lord says about Zion, 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye.'" Another has said, "The nations appear to be beginning to burden themselves with Jerusalem. They do so without acknowledging the rights of Christ, who is alone the true King of Jerusalem, but God shall make good the claims of Christ."

We do not pretend to judge or endorse the U.N. or any other of man's efforts in governing the world but rather just to notice the facts. What we feel is important is to acknowledge God and to rest in Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will.

The enemies of Judah and Jerusalem were warned in Isa. 8:9, 10, "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us." Immanuel means God with us. When that is true in the person of Christ the King, in the land that is His, and He takes claim to it, then all confederacies and associations shall indeed be broken in pieces. We, as Christians, do not look for this now but rather for the Lord to come for us and bring us into the Father's house with all its eternal blessings. And when He takes His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords, we will reign with Him.

As belonging to Christ now, we ask: "What ought we to do?" Certainly we ought to obey Him as our Lord. Daily we should pray, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" We will find Him always to

be a gracious, loving Master who knows us perfectly and desires our happiness and blessing and communion each day.

What's Going on?

What is going on in your life? Will it result in a good report?

Department, behavior and conduct are graded at the end of the school term. Have you ever received an "E" for excellent on your report card? Has it been less than that? Of course we all like very much to receive a good report.

To get a good report at the end of the Christian pathway just one special thing is necessary. It is faith. Paul could say in the most adverse circumstances, "I believe God." That is faith. (See Acts 27:25.) Through faith "the elders obtained a good report." Heb. 11:2.

The standard upon which we as Christians are graded is perfection. This is because we "are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26. Therefore, we are supposed to be in our conduct and behavior what we are as sons of God. This is where faith must come in, in our daily lives. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]." Heb. 11:6. In our behavior, true faith will be manifest by dependence upon God and obedience to Him.

In Paul's first epistle to Timothy he gave him instruction to know how to behave "in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." 1 Tim. 3:15. This instruction for behavior is still true for us today, and more instruction is added in the second epistle for these last days. In 2 Tim. 3:16-17 it says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Our time of schooling is this whole life. We are

producing our report now. The Christian's retirement is "out of this world" literally when the Lord Jesus comes for us.

What's Going on?

To every one of us, the events that happen in our own lifetime are full of interest. Some of those events affect us and others apparently do not. What happens on the other side of the world generally does not excite our interest. We notice much more what happens closer to us.

The truth of the Lord's coming has been known and taught largely in Christendom for about 150 years. We know on the authority of God's Word that the Lord Jesus will first come for His people and that a little later He will come back with us to reign over the earth. Between His coming for His own and His coming with them, there are many judgments to take place and there will be signs of His coming in power and glory. Surely even now there are events that are in preparation for those things that will take place during that time that is called the tribulation.

We do not want to make too much of what any of us may see in our own short lifetime. Yet we should consider what is happening in view of how it may relate to Christ and His glory.

A short time ago we called attention to some of the events amongst the nations that are in the Middle East. Now, let us consider another thing. It is what the Bible calls a falling away. Abandoning what one believed in, as a faith, is the definition of apostasy as given in Webster's dictionary. Quite likely you have known or heard of someone who has done this. Truth that was once known and professed is given up. Why is it so? Is this a sign of the times in which we live?

We find something about this in 2 Thess. 2:3. We quote: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." In the Spanish Bible in this verse "falling away" is translated "apostasy." They both mean the same thing. From this scripture we learn clearly that before a certain day there is a falling away, that is, a giving up of truth once professed. The day spoken of here is the day of "the Christ" or "the Lord." It is the time when God will begin to manifest the lordship of Christ.

One of the truths that is today given up by some in Christendom is the rapture, the Lord's coming for the Church. This truth has been commonly known and taught in Christendom for many years. Reports have come to us from both Canada and the United States of rather prominent persons who have given up this truth.

The "rapture" as we speak of it comes from 1 Thess. 4:17, and the very word can be used in place of caught up. It is so translated in some Bibles. "Shall be caught up" or "shall be raptured" is the definite statement. Do we believe it or do we not? It is the Word of God.

It is sad to hear of some, who certainly should know better, questioning or denying this wonderful "blessed hope." See Titus 2:13. Peter writes of our time, saying, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Pet. 3:3, 4.

Another thing that is being denied is the clear teaching of dispensations. In Eph. 1 we read of "the dispensation of the fullness of times." That particular dispensation is coming and will be when God gathers together all things in Christ and to His glory both in heaven and in earth. The "times" in the above expression refers to other dispensations as, the law before the cross and grace in this present period. When we are "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15) we will understand and wonderfully rejoice in the order in God's Word and clearly see different dispensations.

Are we not in the last days? Little by little it seems that truth once known or professed is being given up or abandoned.

For Christians there is an exhortation that is very specific when we see the day of apostasy approaching. It is Heb. 10:24, 25. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." The next verse speaks of willful sin after having received the knowledge of the truth. This is falling away or apostasy. So then we see that the exhortation of assembling of ourselves together is given especially because of seeing the day of apostasy getting nearer.

Where Is the Wise? Where Is the Scribe?

All intelligence of the things of God comes from His revelation, and not from the reasonings of men. Hence, the simple go farther in spiritual understanding than the wise and prudent of the earth. God acts here so as to set aside all appearance of human wisdom. Happy is he who has so seized the intention of God as to be identified with it, and to want none but God! This was the case with the shepherds. They little entered into the great intention of God, but it was to them, and not to the prudent, that God revealed Himself. Our true wisdom is through what God reveals, but we never get God's fullest blessings till we are where the flesh is brought down - I speak as regards walk. We cannot get into the simple joy and power of God till we accept the place of lowliness and humiliation, till the heart is emptied of what is contrary to the lowliness of Christ. These shepherds were in the quiet fulfillment of their humble duty, and that is the place of blessing. Whoever is keeping on terms with the world is not walking with God. From the manger to the cross, all in Christ was simple obedience. How unlike this perfect example was Theudas, who boasted himself to be somebody! Christ did all in God's way, and we must learn to do as well.

The glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds; the angel spoke to them; the sign was given, and what a sign! "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God." What called forth this burst of praise? "The mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." The hope of Israel was revealed to them; they heard the glad tidings of great

joy to all the people, for Jesus is the pivot of all God's counsels in grace. Adam himself was only a type of Him who was to come. Christ was ever in the mind of God. Such displays of glory are not shown to mortal eyes every day, but God sets them before us in His Word, and we must every day follow the given sign, the Lord Jesus. If He filled the eye, the ear, the heart, how we should see the effects in person, spirit, conversation, dress, house, use of money, etc.

Such then is the sign of God's accomplishment of promise, and of His presence in the world - a Babe in a manger. But God is found there, though these things are beyond man, who cannot walk with God, nor understand His moral glory. But God's sign is within the reach of faith; it is the token of perfect weakness, a little infant born into this world who was the very CHRIST THE LORD; such is the place God chose - the low degree. God's intervention is recognized by a sign like this; man would not have sought that. The heavenly host, praising God, said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward [in] men." Nothing could be higher or more astonishing (except the cross) for those who have the mind of heaven. The choir above sees God manifested in flesh, and praises God in the highest. They rejoice that His delights are with the sons of men (see Pro. 8:31). Of old, God had displayed Himself to Moses in a flame of fire without consuming the bush, and here He shows Himself still more marvelously, in the feeblest thing on earth. This is an infinite thought morally, though despicable in the eyes of the world. How hard it is to receive that God works through man's weakness! The rulers of the people saw in Peter and John unlearned and ignorant men. Paul's weakness at Corinth was the trial of his friends, the taunt of

his enemies, the boast of himself. The Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. The thorn in the flesh made Paul despised, and he thought it would be better if that were gone. He had need of the lesson, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is God's rule of action to choose the weak things. Everything must rest on God's power, otherwise God's work cannot be done according to His mind. One can hardly believe that one must be feeble to do the work of God, but Christ "was crucified through weakness," and, "the weakness of God is stronger than men" (2 Cor. 13:4; 1 Cor. 1:25). For the work of God we must be weak, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 2 Cor. 4:7. That work will last when all the earth shall be moved away.

Women of Scripture: Lydia

Outside the city of Philippi, by a riverside, each sabbath day a few women assembled for prayer. See Acts 16:13.

A riverbank was a favorite resort for this purpose where there was no synagogue, and these praying women were evidently Jewish, although the city was itself sunk in heathen idolatry.

Among them was Lydia of Thyatira, a seller of the richly-dyed goods for which her native town was famous.

She was a Grecian woman, but had become a worshiper of the God of Israel.

Consequent upon the vision of a Macedonian crying for help, the Apostle Paul, accompanied by Silas and apparently also by the physician Luke, and Timothy, had reached Philippi, being the bearers of the "gospel of the glory" received directly from the risen and exalted Lord. Hearing of the resort for prayer, they joined the little company of women at the riverside and sat down and spoke with them about the things of God.

Lydia listened, and as she listened, the Lord gave her the capacity to receive the divine message of love and grace, for, in the beautifully expressive words of Scripture, the work in her soul is described thus - "whose heart the Lord opened," with the result that "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

She was ready and desirous to learn, and the Lord saw that she did not lack the opportunity. He had His eye on a little company of saints who later on were to be for His glory in testimony in this very city, and a great source of joy and cheer to the beloved Apostle. Lydia was to be one of the number, and this was her preparation.

What an inestimable blessing it is to have "an open heart" - opened by the Lord Himself and thus fitted to receive, and to respond to, divine communications!

When Lydia's heart was opened she attended to the things spoken by Paul, and I feel this to be significant.

Many of "the things which were spoken of Paul," and dictated to him by the Spirit of God, are still on record, handed down to us in the Scriptures of truth. Have we attended to them as God's communications to us?

They are full of wondrous, deep, searching truths, especially encouraging and necessary in these closing days of the Church's history on earth to all those who, on account of possessing opened hearts, desire to respond intelligently and in true affection to the Lord's will for His own.

Lydia may have had only this one opportunity, during the Apostle's stay in the city, of hearing what was in the heart of God for her, but she made the most of it.

She was baptized as was her household; that is, she definitely and publicly identified herself with Christ's death, putting herself and all she possessed under the Lord's control; then she besought the Lord's servants - "constraining" them (a strong word meaning that she could not take a refusal) to come to her house and abide there. There was one condition; however - if they judged her to be faithful to the Lord - and they evidently did. What a triumph of grace!

She was once a heathen, but the Lord made an entrance into her heart. She listened to God's communications through Paul; she attended to them, definitely linked herself with the Lord's interests, owned His control over herself and all her own, earnestly desired to be faithful to Him, and consequently opened her house to His servants. Have we made as much spiritual progress as Lydia?

A true work of God was begun in that city, so Satan could not let it alone. He tried to spoil it by craft and through the testimony of an evil spirit possessing a young girl, who repeatedly proclaimed that the apostles were the servants of the Most High God.

Paul had spiritual discernment to detect that this was said to elate them, and if allowed, would mix what was of God with evil. If what the possessed damsel asserted was true, that they were the servants of the Most High God (and it was, only the time was anticipated, this being God's millennial name), the evil spirit must submit to the power present there by being driven away. "Paul... turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

Oh! the power of that name. The enemy flees before it.

Persecution and imprisonment followed for God's servants, but it bore fruit in the conversion and baptism of the jailor and his household, another triumph over the power of Satan exerted against God's truth.

The result of the hatred and tumult raised by him as a last resource is very marked - (1) Paul and Silas sang praises to God. The victims of Satan's hate were rejoicing and exultant. (2) The prison doors were burst open by God's intervention.

(3) The jailor and his family were eternally blessed. (4) The magistrates were obliged to come as suppliants to the Apostle.

Satan was unmistakably frustrated.-

How had all this affected Lydia? Had all the opposition and persecution shaken her faith? On the contrary; the Apostle showed-utmost confidence in her, and indeed judged her faithful to the Lord, for, being released from prison he and Silas immediately went to her house, where they were certain of a welcome. Then, after seeing and comforting the brethren, they started on their journey to Thessalonica.

It would be well for us to question whether we, like this devout woman of God, would be likewise judged faithful to the Lord. Have we, like Lydia, open hearts and open homes? "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Heb. 13:7

Ye Are Dead

In a day like this in which the name of Christ is taken up very easily, it becomes a very solemn question whether we are truly following after Christ, whether the cross is before the mind as that which crucifies the world to us. A very solemn question is aimed at the very core of the inward life in those who are Christ's-Do they know the cross? or, Do they show forth the spirit of the world? Is it in their hearts? Take anyone passing through the street-the world is all about him, but is it in his heart, or is he living outside of it? It is a blessed thing to say, We have naught to think of or to seek but heavenly things. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God"; that is our profession.

If there is a place strange to me, it ought to be this place where my Lord was crucified. If this is not the case, then what else is it but a place where I am walking in the flesh?

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:1-3.

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