

CRUMBS FOR THE LORD'S LITTLE ONES VOLUME 2

by H.H. Snell

A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones Volume 2, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

68 Chapters

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Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones Volume 2

Heb. 13:8

Is one view of it, the Epistle to the Hebrews may be said to be, a divine testimony to the truth of this short verse: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” For the thought of the Lord’s stability pervades the epistle, the stability of all that He deals with, and of all who trust in Him; in other words, His perfection.

Over this epistle, read in this light, the believing soul might breathe out the words of the 90th Psalm: “Lord thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations!” For it is a Psalm which recognizes the vanity or perishableness of everything, by reason of sin, and that through Christ alone is anything to be “established.” He imparts “glory” and “beauty,” according to that Psalm, but stability also.

It is like the Apostle’s thought in 1st chapter of 2nd Corinthians. However uncertain other things may have been (even, if the Corinthians pleased, his purposes concerning them), yet the gospel was firm; the promises of God to the believer, yea, and Amen; and the believer himself, an established, anointed, and sealed one forever.

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

His person is thus fixed and stable for eternity. The anointed Jesus is still “the same.” But so is all that He deals with or handles, as this epistle, in the progress of it, also discloses; whether it be His blood, His priesthood, His covenant, or His kingdom. There is no principle of decay, no blemish or cause of death, anywhere. No taint or uncertainty is found here, but stability is attached to each and all ■ “the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

His blood or sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, “is established” on the inadequacy of every other. It has been offered “through the eternal Spirit” (9:14). In token of which, Jesus has sat down in the heavens, with a thought about an entirely different thing. God has promised Him that His enemies shall be made His footstool, and He is expecting that event. That is—so fully has His sacrifice discharged His business, and secured the way of the grace of God, that the mind in heaven can now be occupied with glory and the kingdom, or the judgments that lead to it. There is “no more offering for sin.”

And, accordingly, the sinner that pleads this blood is “perfected forever.” His sins are purged, and he is sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (see chap. 10).

His priesthood is “untransferable” and “continual.” He is “a priest forever,” and made “after the power of an endless life.” And this is witnessed by His being ordained by the oath of God, the expression or language of an unrepentable purpose. He “ever liveth to make intercession.”

And, accordingly, the believer who looks to such a priest is saved to the uttermost. He can never fail him. Years and generations find Him the same, as the beginning had made Him and left Him (see chap. 12).

The covenant which He ministers, in like character, is stable; it is never "old." God never finds fault with it, so as to call forth another to succeed it, and thus make it old, and "ready to vanish away." It abides always "new." It is called "the everlasting covenant."

And, accordingly, the blessings conferred by it are eternal; the sins and iniquities it remits are remembered "no more" (see chap. 8).

The throne which He takes is "forever and ever." It is untransferable and eternal. And, accordingly, the kingdom which, by-and-bye, the saints receive, is a kingdom that "cannot be moved." The earth has already been shaken■heaven and earth will by-and-bye be shaken■but the kingdom which the saints receive "cannot be moved." The consuming fire can never reach it, though it may burn up all beside. The saints are heirs of such a kingdom: they have in subjection to them "the world to come"■a world not destined to pass, but still to come, and to abide (see 1:8, 2:5; 12:28).

Such is the illustration of this short verse afforded by the epistle. The practical word for us is this—not to change our confidence, or transfer it from Him, seeing that He changes not, nor transfers His things to any other. In the sight of all this glorious stability, in Christ our faith is to be stable. This is the characteristic exhortation of this epistle, as the other is the characteristic doctrine. This is the exhortation suited to the doctrine; and, therefore, the Apostle is seen throughout the epistle to be in dread of the Hebrew believers changing the ground of their confidence, and surrendering their souls to the keeping of some religious provisions, in departure from the perfection and sufficiency of Christ. This is the fear which pervades the epistle, as the stability of Christ and all that he touches is the doctrine that pervades it. He sounds an alarm. He blows one of the silver trumpets of the house of God; and, in a different spirit from that in which it was uttered of old, He says, "Let the Hebrews hear." For He says, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." And, again: "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." And, again, speaking as in the person of God himself, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And the solemn words, in chapter 6 and 10, are all upon the giving up of Christ, the "falling away" from the confession of His sufficiency, or the doing "despite to the spirit of grace."

Thus, then, the Lord Jesus stands strong, and all that he deals with. But He alone. "The earth and its inhabitants are dissolved. I bear up the pillars thereof." His blood, His priesthood, His covenant, His kingdom, never wax old. And, blessed (had we but hearts softened to receive the form of such a truth) He communicates all this stability to us, as we have seen. Faith appreciates and appropriates it.

Thus, what Abigail said to David, that his life was bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord his God, this epistle says to us all■we are interested in Christ's stability. He shares His eternity with us.

'Jesus shall our treasure be

Through His own eternity.'

It is our blessing, as it is to His praise, that the admiring Apostle says, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Job's End

The last chapter of the book of Job, compared with the first chapter, gives several striking incidents of the Lord's character in restoring grace.

There is not only grace, but the largeness of that grace in reference to Job, and much that was connected with his history.

The testimony of the Holy Ghost in James is, "Take, my brethren, the Prophets, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Job had desired that his words were engraven in a rock, that generations might learn from his testimony: but the Lord had a manner of unfolding his grace, in connection with Job's trial, that Job at the time had little idea of.

In all that was seen at the beginning connected with affliction and loss to Job, the Lord takes occasion to unfold His purposes of restoring grace.

Thus it was, there was no description of sorrow or loss that Job met at the beginning, but has a corresponding description, with a rich provision of joy in the end, through the tender mercy of the Lord.

The very particular mention of each kind of affliction, only expresses more plainly the pity of the Lord in every minute particular of His servant's trial; and exhibits the largeness of the Lord's heart, in his purposes in restoration.

Did he at the beginning lose seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses; then he had in the end fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand she asses.

The restoration was not only complete to satisfy the servant's heart with fullness of joy, but it was more; it was double on all his loss; it was the expression of the Lord's tender mercy. Had he met the grief of countenance charged against him his own familiar friends standing aloof from his love this also the blessed Lord turns to account in restoring joy.

Then there is in the seven sons and three daughters, the complete filling up of all his former sorrows, in measures of fullness of joy and blessing.

The names of his three daughters: first, Jemima (handsome as the day); second, Kezia (cassia); third, Keren-happuch (child of beauty); answer the purposes of the Lord's restoring grace, and giving to his servant the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness, and beauty for ashes.

The blotting out of the legal spirit in the three friends, and reference to atonement by blood, and intercession; and the channel of blessing into which Job is led, in the place of self-abasement, to enjoy the Lord in His light, gives the key to restoring joy.

Gen. 48

ONE of the things about which we are often liable to err is the spiritual condition of God's dear children. We cannot always discern a man's state by his words. When we complain of a person not seeing as we do in any given case, it may be that the Lord is leading his soul into some other spiritual exercise, in which he becomes absorbed. "They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." There are some Christians who seldom fail on great occasions, and yet who continually offend in small matters, and vice versa. Some, of whom we expect the least, make the best testimony in the day of trial; others, of whom we should hope the most, fail on some special occasions.

Joseph and Jacob in their state of soul, as exhibited in Genesis 48, strikingly illustrate these remarks. As soon as God had completed His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He brings out in Joseph a most prominent type of the already promised seed. In the history, as well as in the personal ways of Joseph, we have the most affecting discoveries of the person and grace of the Lord Jesus. The history is always fresh, and available alike to the little child and to the matured saint. But, in every type, there is some striking defect in the person exhibiting it, by which we are to see that "this shall not be the same." Jesus must have the excellence in all things. Upon the other hand, where the Spirit of God has been obligated to show forth the failure in the personal qualities of some man, who is otherwise, and by his position, a marked type of Christ, something is brought out very fixedly to stamp the Character of an otherwise entirely defective man. We see this remarkably exhibited in Samson and Jacob.

Trial and discipline are seen in the case of Jacob. His history portrays the sorrows incident to an unquiet saint, who wishes to have his promised blessings in his own way, and the chastisements inflicted upon him by the Lord as a consequence; but throughout we are forced to see the constant care of the Lord over him, because election is also involved in trial and discipline. His life was one of failure. "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," was his confession to Pharaoh, yet the Spirit of God takes care to record, that "by faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

In tracing the character of Joseph, we have heard it seriously argued, that the cup by which his servant said he divined, was a proof that he practiced heathen rites; but, we are to observe, (Gen. 44:5,) that it was the steward only who said of it, "whereby indeed he divineth," and that Joseph's own account of himself is only, "Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine" (margin, "make trial"). We believe that the silver cup in Benjamin's sack is only to be used by us now as a proof that God, by means of Christ, can prove the most innocent to be guilty; and this upon our own asseveration, as Benjamin, the most innocent, was found an offender by a rule of his own laying down. But this by the way.

What then, is the failure of Joseph? Surely Gen. 48 will furnish an answer. Jacob was on his death-bed full of faith, and Joseph going to close his eyes takes with him his two sons, no doubt to get his father's blessing for them. Here occurs a scene illustrative in Jacob's case of that Scripture,

“The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart” (Eccl. 7:1, 2).

Jacob, on the arrival of his son by the bedside, briefly relates the appearance of God Almighty to him at Luz, and the promised blessing. He then prophetically places Ephraim and Manasseh (not Manasseh and Ephraim as Joseph was hoping) among the number of his children, and touchingly alludes to the death and burial of Joseph’s mother. It is evident that his deepest affections were with this dear son now before him; and that the decision he afterward evinced not to meet his fleshly desires must have been a real grief to him. Meanwhile he wakes up, as it were, to the presence of Joseph’s sons, and desires that they may be brought near, that he might bless them. Here begins the failure of Joseph: his ears had, without doubt, heard the previous announcement of the name of Ephraim before that of Manasseh (vs. 5), and he ought to have argued from the prophetic strain, in which Jacob was delivering himself, that this was no mistake, and no unmeaning change. It would have been well, then, had he stood a little in awe, and let it appear how God was going to act, instead of making a fleshly arrangement, by which, like his grandmother, Rebecca of old, he sought to practice upon the declining strength and dim eyesight of his father, and thus secure the right of the first-born to Manasseh: and this attempt was the more sorrowful, inasmuch as beginning from his great grandfather, Abraham, downwards—the blessing through Isaac, Jacob, and himself, had ever gone in the way of God’s election and calling, and not according to the will of the flesh (John 1:13). Joseph, fearful of losing the blessing for Manasseh, contrives, by taking him in his left hand, to place him opposite his father’s right, but the artifice does not succeed; and when his father crosses his hands, and blesses Ephraim first, we are told “it displeased him, and he held up his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head,” and he said, “Not so my father.” Here, then, was assuredly a gap in the faith of Joseph! Prosperity is dangerous for any saint. “The house of feasting,” at Pharaoh’s court, may have weakened for the moment the spiritual elements in the otherwise faithful Joseph. He had forgotten the old announcement, that “the elder shall serve the younger,” and wanted a house for himself to be built up, not by God’s Spirit, but upon its own foundation; and he had, like all of us, to receive his blessings by the crossing of his own will. “If any man will be wise in this weed, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

This little history may be of use to us as a warning against undue expectations for our children. “The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it.” If we are training them with an undue bias, owing to some natural qualifications or expectations, it is most probable that the end will be disappointment. The Lord has made himself the center of blessing, both for ourselves and them.

But what of Jacob in all this touching scene? What of him who had seconded his mother’s scheme for the disfranchising of his brother’s rights; and who, in this present instance, must have had that sin painfully brought home to him—of him who had pilled the white strakes in the hazel and chestnut rods, that he might increase to his own interest the speckled and spotted cattle—of him who stole away unawares from his father-in-law; and who, after all his brother Esau’s kindness to him, broke his promise by going to Succoth instead of Seir—of him whose life, in the midst, notwithstanding, of powerful deliverances on the part of God, had been a series of contrivances for his own interest, although we can also discern a certain trust in the Lord? Let us behold him now

on his death bed, with the beloved son before him, at the report of whose death he had refused to be comforted. How all the graces of the saint shine forth, mingled also with a full tide of natural affection. He learns now, for the first time, to put everything into its place. As to confession-mark how he alludes (vs. 11) to his want of faith, in not believing that God would be better than his fears concerning Joseph. See him (vs. 15) in contrast with his own crooked ways, confessing that it was the God before whom his fathers had walked, that had fed him up to that day; and, behold him, whilst feelingly commenting on the death of Rachel, and looking upon Joseph with the tenderest affection, yet steadily declining to meet his wishes concerning the first-born after the flesh. Again, we see him triumphing in faith, whilst worshipping with his staff as a pilgrim, in the certainty of the land of Canaan being theirs by an everlasting possession; and, in the next chapter, insisting upon being buried in the field of Ephron the Hittite, thereby pledging himself to a personal interest in that land.

All this was Jacob on his death-bed—and such for the moment was not Joseph. Prosperity had made him forget himself. Jacob, with his eyes dim, and his life at its last, was made to see, that it is “not of him that willeth, nor of him that month, but of God that showeth mercy.” It was his last day on earth. Oh! how much happier would he have been, had he learned the secret, that “the flesh profiteth nothing,” a little earlier in his life; then, indeed, had his “peace flowed as a river;” then, indeed, as God had truly been with him in all his difficulties, so he would have learned that they were sent but for the exercise of his faith, and would have found them but the occasions for drawing upon the fullness of God. Surely in our place of death and resurrection, we have need of more practical exhibitions of our own death at the Cross, and of our risen life in Him. May we, too, learn in the failure of Joseph, the danger of prosperous circumstances, blinding our eyes to the purposes of God concerning ourselves and children.

Praise

GOD draws forth praise from his creatures, by unfolding Himself in His works and ways. The more He manifests Himself, the more He is to be praised. The contemplation of God must ever have this blessed result. Permanent praise will be the condition of that soul that keeps God continually in view as He is revealed in Jesus. Some dark cloud must be hanging over us, obscuring the light of His glory in the face of Jesus, when we feel ourselves unable to praise and worship God. The object of these few lines is, to stir up the hearts of God's redeemed, to sing His praises with a louder and more abiding song. Our God has said, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me."

The first sounding forth of praise that we have noticed in Scripture is, when God laid the foundation of the earth and the corner stone thereof. Then "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38). The invisible things of God were clearly seen by the things which he had made, even His eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1). Here, then, was a glorious sight for the angels to contemplate; they saw their God in every hue of His fair creation, and as they beheld Him, they sang His praise. They saw Him in His works, and they adored the Creator.

They see Him again in His ways of grace as unfolded in Jesus. What a burst of angelic praise issued forth from the heavenly host, when they announced the Saviour's birth, and the riches of divine grace which were to flow through our Immanuel. When the angel proclaimed the gospel of glad tidings, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." What a thrilling effect had the angel's proclamation on the heavenly host, and how they responded with one harmonious song of praise (Luke 2)!

The same angelic burst is seen in glory, when the risen Jesus, as the slain Lamb, takes the book out of the hand of Him who sat on the throne. Here the heavenly redeemed lead the praises of Jesus, and tens of thousands of angels follow in their train, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb." (Rev. 5)

When Israel had passed the Red sea and stood safely on the other side, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." What a rich and triumphant stream of praise broke forth from Israel on that occasion, as they stood amid the triumphs of redeeming grace; salvation perfect and complete filled their minds, and by faith they plant their feet in the glorious land, and enter into their promised rest.

See them again, in the presence of Solomon's temple, which was exceedingly magnificol of fame and of glory throughout all countries; what a burst of praise came forth from the assembled multitude, as we read in 2 Chronicles 7:3, and when the heavenly fire, and the heavenly glory, drew forth these praises of their God, and they praised the Lord, saying, "For He is good; for His mercy endureth forever."

When Jesus retired from His disciples by His ascent to glory, what a happy state He left them in—the fruit of the redemption He had just accomplished: we read that they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Jesus had previously opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures, and the things concerning Himself: He led them into the secret things of His kingdom and glory; and now they, who had mourned before, are found openly praising and blessing God. Such is the fruit of known redemption in the soul. Praise must follow the wonders of redemption where they are seen and known. Gladness and singleness of heart filled the saved multitude, as they worshipped in Jerusalem the risen and glorified Jesus. The knowledge of Jesus brings with it peace and joy. He gives “the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” ■ “whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

Praise, as we have said before, is produced by the object that possesses and fills the mind. “The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” The glorious brightness of the throne is so great that it produces this holy worship and heavenly praise. Did we keep this throne ever before us, what ceaseless worship and untiring praise would be ever ascending up from us to our heavenly Father. Neither murmuring nor complaining should have a place in the family of God: they belong not to our calling, and are offensive to the divine ear. Blessed be God, the time is coming when all in heaven, and in earth, and everything that has breath shall praise the Lord. Surely the saints should now anticipate their heavenly songs, and even now fall continually before the throne with praises and adoration.

Let us, beloved, retune our harps to Jesus’ name, and sing his praises with a louder and more lofty song. Paul and Silas sang praises in their prison; we should rejoice in tribulation also, and in Everything give thanks. Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely (Ps. 147:1).

In Rev. 2, 3

Ten promises, how unallor'd,

How in the word of God they shine,

What varied skill is there employ'd,

How are they full of power divine

To him who overcomes.

The "Tree of Life," which is within

The sacred "paradise of God,"

No place for Satan or for sin,

Bought and secured by Jean's blood

For him who overcomes.

"The second death," the lake of fire,

No hurt no pain shall bring:

Justice, thou hast no righteous ire!

O Death, thou hast no poisoned sting!

For him who overcomes.

"The hidden manna," heavenly cheer,

The precious secret stone of white,

With graven name, both new and clear,

These are the promises so bright

To him who overcomes.

The "Rod of Iron," in the hand,

Power to rule the nations far;

No more to suffer, but command;

Behold as well "the morning star,"

For him who overcomes.

The raiment white, the written name,

In God's eternal Book of Life;
This far exceeds the highest fame;
Then boldly war the Holy strife,
Ye saints, and overcome.
Their names before the hosts confessed,
Before the Majesty above,
Their wrongs in God's own light redress'd,
These are the gifts of wondrous love
To those who overcome.
To be a pillar in the place
Where God Himself delights to dwell,
And there forever praise that Grace,
Whose depth and height none knows so well
As he who overcomes.
To sit with Christ upon His Throne,
To know and see Him face to face,
To know as ye yourselves are known!
Then run with eager step the race,
Ye saints, and overcome.

Luke 10:25-37

WHAT a picture does the parable of the good Samaritan present of the gracious way of the Son of God with poor sinners! His love in the gospel is perfect.

It is perfect, as the expression of the divine love; but in its varied multiform beauty and perfection, we may treat and regard it as the pattern or model of love of one's neighbor also. The good Samaritan loved the poor way-laid man as Himself. He spent on him His sympathies and His property—the treasures of His heart and of His hand. He rendered him all kinds of service. As it were, He changed places or conditions with him. And all this was an unwearied unrepentant love; for He provided for the future, as well as for the present. He did as much for him, one may say, as He could have done for Himself.

He enlisted others to bestow their care and their substance on him, but all this, not at their cost, but at His.

What was wanting, beloved? Nothing. The necessity, deep as it was, had it been His own could not have been more thoroughly met and answered.

The parable, however, suggests another thought.

There are two ways in which I, a poor sinner, may have to do with this good Samaritan. I may be a debtor to Him, or an imitator of Him.

The lawyer who came with his question to Christ never thought of assuming the first of these attitudes. His thoughts were entirely on the law, and what he himself could do. The Saviour, in answer to that, can suggest nothing less than perfection, or the imitation of Himself. Had he approached the Lord with a broken heart, he would have been otherwise answered—in some way that would have preached to him the grace, and not the example of the good Samaritan.

But let us, beloved, take our place with the poor way-laid traveler, before we ever think of taking our place with his generous Benefactor. We will be debtors to Jesus, before we think of becoming imitators of Jesus.

And, sure I am, the more simply by faith we assume the first of these relationships to Him, the more really, and largely, and graciously, shall we act in the power of the second. It is only by the constraining's of the love of Christ to ourselves, that we can act in concert or sympathy with that love to others.

The lawyer would have to find that he must become the way-laid man before he could become, in any true evangelic sense, the companion or imitator of the good Samaritan who befriended him.

And, it is strange in the ear of the moralist to say it, but so it is, the blessed God is more honored by my consenting to be a debtor to Him, than by all my efforts to be an imitator of Him. And that imitation at best, will ever be found, and confessed to be, but partial.

May we all know, more richly than we do, the precious power and presence of the Spirit, to give Jesus and Heaven more authority with our hearts!

Hymn

“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”■Matt. 18:20.

AROUND Thee, gracious Lord, we meet,

'Tis good to sit at Thy dear feet,

And think upon thy love:

Speak to our hearts, and make us feel

That thou art present now to heal,

And raise our thoughts above.

Head of thy Church! we worship Thee,

And praise the grace that set us free,

And glory in Thy name:

Our souls from every care divest,

And let us lean upon Thy breast,

Unchangeably the same.

With heart-felt thanks Thy flesh we eat,

And think upon Thy hands, Thy feet,

Thy soul's deep agonies:

We drink by faith Thy precious blood,

Which Thou in matchless love didst shed

For us, Thine enemies.

Now, by the Holy Ghost, reveal

Thy glories, O Immanuel,

Shew us Thou'rt “God with us:”

Thy gifts and grace to each impart,

That we may warm each other's heart,

And glory in Thy cross.

And may our eyes uplifted be,
'Till in the clouds Thyself we see,
Our precious Saviour-God!
When all who love Thee thee shall reign,
Apart from sin and every pain,
With Thee our risen Lord.

2 Sam. 15

A CAREFUL reader of Scripture easily distinguishes two characters of suffering as belonging to the Lord Jesus; one in which he suffers as a righteous man from the hand of unrighteousness, ■ “But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth; this did not Abraham: “and the other, the sufferings which He had directly from the hand of His Father at the cross, ■ “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Peter puts these two characters in close connection, when he says, “who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.” * * * * who “His own-self bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:23, 24).

Joseph exhibits more prominently the sufferings of Christ among His unbelieving brethren. Joseph was eminently righteous: hence the jealousy, the malice, the typical death which he underwent at their hands ■ all with the meekness of a lamb. But David, in the scene before us, seems more to resemble Christ, as the sin-bearer, but with this weighty difference, ■ that David, at the ascent of Olivet, is there for his own sin; whereas the Lord was there for the sins of His people.

Let us review some of the circumstances which preceded this solemn scene. It had been said to David, by Nathan (2 Sam. 12:10). “The sword shall never depart from thine house;” and no doubt, when the conspiracy of Absalom broke out, we must in this way account for David’s haste to escape, ■ “Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom;” although “the king’s servants said unto the king, behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.” The best solution of such haste is to be found in the supposition that David felt the Lord’s chastisement was to be upon him, and that he would receive the cup from His hand.

And now the real grace of David begins to appear. First we have the moving scene (18:20) between him and Ittai with his Gittites. It was as if he had said, “If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way.” How ready he is to give to Absalom, if the Lord so wills it, the title of king, ■ “Wherefore goest thou also with us? Return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? Return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee.” What an harmonious blending of humility and dignity in these words! But Ittai, like the centurion of old, had “not so learned Christ.” It is surely not unreasonable to suppose, that it was the grace of David, seen by Ittai at the court of Achish, that had attracted him and his companions to seek his presence at Jerusalem. They might have had the glory of arms and of a kingdom at Gath, but it was the person of David which they loved and followed; hence the noble answer, “Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there also will thy servant be.” It should be ever so with us. It is the person of Christ which should fill up our picture.

It was the mercy and truth that were found with David that had attracted Ittai. “And all the country wept with a loud voice: * * * * the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron” (comp. John 18:1). Although it had been told David, “the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom; “yet the true sorrow was for David, even as it was, in an after day, for David’s Lord.

Then occurs the touching circumstance of David declining to be accompanied by the Ark. He would be entirely alone. No sign of the presence and power of God, as to outward circumstances, should go with him. He voluntarily allowed himself, as it were, to be forsaken. He had sung of old, in his prosperous days, ■ “Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest; Thou and the Ark of Thy strength; for the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation.” And now, if he be, by the righteous judgment of God, to be cast out of Jerusalem, he refuses to take the Ark from its proper dwelling-place. A faint resemblance to Him who said, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

We do well to observe the way in which David behaves himself under these adverse circumstances■ in his own estimation he goes for nothing. He knew full well his own deserts. What are ours? As a whole, however, in particular cases, men may have misjudged us. Surely we must confess ourselves vile. There was no right on Absalom’s side: but David knew his sin; he knew what the Lord had against him; and the words by which he expresses it are above all comment, “If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation; but if He thus say, —I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him” (vss. 25, 26), But let us here remark, that this blessed state of soul does not put aside prayer and watchfulness. David is quick-sighted as to Zadok, and prayerful about Ahithophel. The Lord, though in quite a different way, (for He asked for forgiveness for His enemies,) poured out intercessions in the midst of His deepest agonies and desertion. Oh the mystery of godliness!

Verse 30. “And David went up by the ascent of Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: * * * and they went up, weeping as they went up.”

How meekly the blessed Lord bore His own cross (John 19:17), and how solemn, whilst bearing it, was that warning which he uttered, ■ “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

As he proceeds on his way, Ziba meets him with refreshments, of which, be it spoken with reverence. Christ had none. The cursing of Shimei now begins, and the shameless indignities heaped upon the sacred person of the king, and this with all his chiefs and soldiers around him. This provokes the pride of David’s attendants■of these sons of Zeruah, ■politic as regards the things of the kingdom, skillful as to David’s affairs in a certain sense, but utterly ignorant of the heart of that king about whose earthly glory they were solicitous. It was this want of heart which occasioned their downfall in Solomon’s reign. Irritated however, by Shimei’s words, and indignant at his insolence, Abishai says, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?” and he proposes to kill him. Note well, that there are always those to be found who are anxious for the respectability of Christianity; whose flesh works in a religious way, but who are both ignorant of, and averse to the true place of the cross■the place of willing weakness, when one might, all it were, be strong. Such was Abishai at this moment, he was a warrior, when he ought to have been a penitent, a hindrance when he ought to have been a help. David’s sin lay too deep in his bosom; his soul was too much occupied with the controversy that God had with him to heed the cursing of Shimei. His soul was cut open, so to speak, and he would let the wound be probed to the bottom. “So let him curse,” is his answer; “because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall

then say, wherefore past thou done so?" "It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day;" and, indeed, David himself, and greater than he, the true David, was richly requited. Resurrection is the proof. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," &c. (Phil. 2:8,9).

How precious should the study of any part of the word be, which brings before us the grace of Christ, and teaches us the way in which He went through His sufferings! Surely, nothing helps us so much in our daily circumstances, more especially when we remember that He entered in grace into our trials, whilst we get them by the necessity of our condition. "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not." These provings of David do but faintly trace what the blessed Lord went through in the hall of Caiaphas, before Pilate, amid the soldiers and the High Priests, but above all at the cross. Oh! that we might follow, although but feebly, in His footsteps!

And yet in this beautiful scene, when David being at his lowest, we might suppose him least liable to err, we can trace mistakes, to which we can find no parallel in our blessed Lord. His distrust of Mephibosheth, the adopted child, and the giving of his possessions, by the impulse of a moment, to Ziba the homeborn servant—the difficulty he found on his return to rectify this unjust judgment, which he passes over by the vague words, "Have I not said, thou and Ziba divide the land," sufficiently indicate that "judgment had not yet returned unto righteousness." They also forcibly contrast with almost the last words which Christ spoke to His disciples—those poor, infirm, and failing men, who, whilst they had been with Him bodily, had failed in entering either into the object of His mission, or of His death, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto Me."

How wondrous is that grace, which can, among the adopted children, find virtues, where we suspect some evil, and which contrives to put Honor upon those who are conscious of too often dishonoring Him!

"In ME is thy fruit found."

Jonah. The Repentance of Nineveh

WHEN Jonah refused in spirit to be the witness of the abounding grace of God to Nineveh, he was made to learn the lesson of grace in his own person over again in the whale's belly. He had it impressed again on his own soul, that "salvation is of the Lord." It was a terrible process; but we may know, that the Spirit accompanied the Prophet through it, even from the very outset. Therefore he calmly tells the mariners and the shipmaster, to throw him overboard. And the experience he had when in the deep, and in the whale's belly, shows us how graciously and blessedly the Spirit was still with him. Though in the depths of the sea, the billows and the waves passing over him, he was able to look to the Temple; and ere he left the place of death, he speaks of salvation.

Thus he learnt afresh the story of grace. And strength of God lies in the soul's fresh and vigorous apprehension of that grace day by day, rather than in any attainment it may have made in the ways of the Lord.

Thus instructed, thus exercised in Spirit, thus as one who had been made afresh to learn salvation, he went to Nineveh, and Nineveh is spared. But Jonah very quickly forgets the lesson in all the practical force of it. Sad to see it, and to say it. His soul refuses to rejoice in the largeness of the grace wherein he himself was standing—a common way with our wretched narrow hearts; and in a bad temper he goes outside Nineveh, which had thus shared with himself the salvation of God; for he cannot bear to see the uncircumcised, after this manner, in the light of the Lord.

Repulsive, offensive disclosure of these miserable hearts of ours! But in rich and wondrous long-suffering, God again sits down to teach him. The lesson may be the same, but the method of God with the soul in teaching it is different. The Lord is still seeking to melt down the cold and hard heart; but He brings the second coal from a new altar. In the parable, so to call it, of "the withered gourd," He would have Jonah learn the precious secret of His own joy in the grace and salvation He ministers, as before, in the terrific process of the whale's belly, He had been teaching him, through death and resurrection, the grace and salvation in which he himself was standing.

This is the most blessed secret to learn. The gourd that flourished and withered, interpreted by the Lord Himself, made known to Jonah the joy which God takes in the exercise of that grace which had now saved Nineveh—for He "delighteth in mercy," and we may assume that this lesson is effectual—that the coal thus wondrously heated, heated at such an altar as this, heated by such pure mysterious fire as this, melted down the heart of the Prophet to take the form and consistency of the divine grace, and led him to glory in a work that could save such ones as himself and the wicked Ninevites, and at the same time return back to God with a rich harvest of joy and glory.

Is it, then, I ask, beloved, under the melting's and kindling's of such mysteries as these, that our souls are taking their form, and mold, and character? We all need much enlargement of heart, as Jonah did. Peter needed it, and he was taught it by the vision of the sheet (Acts 10). Paul, in measure, needed it, and he was taught it by the vision of the man of Macedonia (Acts 16). Ananias

needed it, and he was taught it by the rebuking word of the Lord, ■ “Go thy way” (Acts 9). Jonah needed it, as we have now seen, and he was taught it, first in the whale’s belly, and then under the withered gourd.

We all need, again I say, beloved, this beautiful, divine enlargement of heart, after the pattern of the heart of Christ. The little captive maid had it, and breathed its temper, when she longed that her master, who had made her captive, were with the Prophet in Samaria, that he might be healed of his leprosy. And Paul had it and uttered it, when he said, looking at the assembly that was holding him in chains, ■ “Would to God that all that hear me this day were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

The poor returned and welcomed prodigal was himself the witness, the silent, humbled, thankful, happy witness of the deep eternal reality of these two mysteries, which Jonah was set to learn. As he sat at the table, honored and refreshed, he was made to feel the grace in which he himself was set, and to witness in all around him, in the feast that he was enjoying, in the robe that he was wearing, and in the music and dancing of the house, the joy that the God of heaven tastes, and will taste forever, in the fruit of His own boundless, unmeasured, grace.

But further: the repentance of Nineveh is involved in this story of Jonah. It is also commented on by our Lord in Matt. 12. It was, as I may say, of the true or right character, because it was in the conscience. The conscience was learning the lesson, or sitting at the feet of the message which God sent to Nineveh; and by that, the will was broken, and the heart subdued.

The Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah. This is what the Lord tells us. And Jonah was but a poor stranger in their city. He had nothing of the world to recommend him to them. As he entered their borders, he was not accompanied by Anything that, after the manner of men, could give dignity or authority to his mission. But this did not offend them. He was a poor unknown stranger, without the seals and standards of the world to give him place and influence; but he bore a message to their conscience, and they bowed. They were convicted. The recollection of their wickedness’s was stirred in their souls, and the message of God by His Prophet, poor and unknown as he was, met its suited answer from them.

This was fruit in season. The generation to which the Lord preached was just the contradiction of this. Instead of bowing, with convicted hearts, under the word, they were asking for a sign from heaven. They demanded some exhibition of power, such as the world could understand and value. They refused to sit as sinners under the preaching. But it was this that the men of Nineveh did. The Jews would have had the Lord approve Himself to the world, on the world’s principles. “Come down from the cross,” said they, “and we will believe thee.” “Show us a sign from heaven.” This was the very contradiction of the way of the Ninevites. But the way of the Ninevites is the saving way, the right way with God, to this day. It is as sinners we must hear and learn. It is the conscience that must be brought to Him, that Jesus may be revealed as the repairer of the mighty breach discovered there: “I that speak unto thee am He.”

In the day of judgment, the men of Nineveh shall rise up against the generation to which Christ preached. It was a “wicked and adulterous generation,” because they sought a sign, a sign of power, such as the world could appreciate. This was their adultery. “O ye adulterers and adulteresses! know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God.” But at Nineveh

things were totally different; the moral of the scene was entirely otherwise. So little was the way of the world taken up, so deeply was the conscience learning the lesson, that the king himself comes down from the throne, and with the humblest of his subjects, in company with the very beasts of the field, repents at the preaching of a poor unknown, unaccredited stranger, who, in the name of God, the God of righteousness and truth, by whom actions are weighed, challenged their consciences.

This was in season ■ repentance according to God ■ and Nineveh was spared. The conscience had bowed to God. The people of Nineveh heard the servant of God as sinners. He had nothing of the world to commend him, but their consciences bowed; they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and God repented Him of the evil that He had thought to do to them.

2 Kings 4

THE touching narrative of the poor widow, recorded in 2 Kings 4 is full of blessing and encouragement for every tried soul. It speaks in every line of the secret treasures hid in the God of grace; and how He can cause all grace to abound unto all joyfulness when every other door seems shut, and no hope left. Such is His divine wisdom, that He is pleased in our weakness to perfect His strength, and to come to our rescue, and our help, when there is none to save, and no eye to pity.

A certain woman (a widow,) was in debt; and the creditor came to take unto him her two sons to be bondmen. What was she to do? She cried unto Elisha the prophet. The man of God asked her what he should do for her. "Tell me," said he, "what hast thou in the house?" "And she said, Thine handmaid hath not Anything in the house, save a pot of oil." She had no possessions, no means to settle with the creditor; her position so far was hopeless. She is directed by the prophet to borrow vessels not a few; to shut the door upon herself and upon her sons, and to pour out from her pot of oil into all the borrowed vessels. She did so, and they were all filled; there was not another to be had; and the oil stayed. The man of God then bade her, "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest." What sweet lessons of God's grace and faithfulness, and of faith, may the poor and needy servants of the Lord find here! What consolations and instruction for their widows and orphans! The husband of the widow, who had lived and died in the fear and service of his Lord, left to His divine and gracious care, his widow and his sons. They had struggled on until the creditor was about to strip the widowed mother of her children. This sorrow her faithful God spared her. Her husband's God wrought for her help. He heard the widow's cry, the cry of the needy one. He sets her free, saves to her sons, and furnishes both her and them with a living also. Well may we say, Let not the widow nor the fatherless fear, but trust in the Lord. They are richer than they think, and mightier, through grace. The house is not empty. The well is not dry. In their very midst is a treasure and a fountain indeed. God, known in grace, can make all grace abound toward them. The husband may be dead, but God liveth, and His fullness in their very midst can neither be measured nor exhausted; liberty, victory, and abundant sustenance He can give.

The widow filled her vessels in secret, according to the prophet's directions. She shut the door upon her and upon her sons. She did it all in faith, in the secret of God's presence. She obeyed the word of the Lord by the prophet, and received the answer and the blessing; even more than she had room to contain. To ensure blessing, we must exercise faith, and rely on the changeless word of our God. In the secret of His presence we shall find an abundant fullness. Our need sends us there, and He opens to us His gracious hand and pours forth abundant blessing. Oh! that our hearts could trust Him, as He would have us, and never for a moment doubt His love, or His ability to help in every time of need! His fountain is one of living waters, while all others fail. Paul was as poor as this desolate widow; yet he could speak well of his fountain, even of those resources he had in the living God. "As having nothing," he said, "and yet possessing all things."

Further: we should not only come to God in times of trial, but we should daily and hourly live upon Him. Israel fed on the paschal Lamb, after they had obtained redemption. So our life should be one of constant faith upon the Son of God, an unceasing dependence upon Him, a continual drawing from His fullness. "Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he" (Prov. 16:20). He is the marrow and the fatness which satisfies the souls of His people. Throughout eternity, they shall be enriched by the rivers of His pleasure.

What a blessed and firm standing the widow now takes before the creditor! She is released upon the ground of payment of all she owed being made to him. The gospel does this for us; we meet God in the blessed confidence, that His Son has paid all our debts; that all our sins were laid on Him, and that He put them away forever, by the sacrifice of Himself. Such are the riches of divine grace, and such the portion of all, who have fled (to Jesus) to lay hold on the hope set before them.

May not the widowed Church also find instruction in this narrative? Her Lord has left her. We are orphans, left by Him wider the care of the Spirit; yet the fountain of grace is ours. He who freely gave His Son, will also with Him freely give us all things. Jesus said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. He knows our need, and He will supply it. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and sympathizes with us in all our sorrows. This is our pot of oil, and is ever with us, ever nigh at hand. Though our Lord be absent, as regards His person, he is ever with us in Spirit, to guide and tend the flock of God, even His widowed and bereaved Church. He causes His people to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. They know His voice, and they follow Him. Soon He will come again, and take His bride away from the tribulation of the world, forever to be with Him in glory above. In the meantime, He is the Shepherd and the Bishop of His people; to Him we look, on Him we lean, in Him every want is supplied, and every desire met.

So very comprehensive is the word of God, that many forms of instruction, of different application, may be gathered from the same Scripture. In this narrative, we have traced the care and the grace of God to orphans and widows; we have also seen the history and characteristics of the Church of God, now sorrowfully realizing the absence of her Lord, but with the fountain of God's unfailing grace in her midst. The same tale also unfolds God's grace to the house of Israel, now forsaken and in widowhood.

Jeremiah thus mourns over Israel, in his Lamentations, chapter 1:1, ■ "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow!" In Isaiah 54:4, the Lord comforts Israel, ■ "For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shall not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." Further, we read in Hosea 5 that Israel will seek the Lord in the latter day, in the time of their sorrow and trial, ■ "In their affliction they will seek Me early." In Isaiah 61 we have the Lord's gracious answer to their cry. Israel is invited, as our widow was, to seek God in secret, ■ "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. 26:20).

John. 11

THE sickness and death of Lazarus procured for the loved family at Bethany a visit from the Lord—a circumstance in itself full of blessing and of promise; and in that visit, we see several things which may well engage our heart and attention.

He sympathizes with the sorrow, and then removes the cause of it. He “wept” first, and afterward said, “Lazarus, come forth.”

The purpose which He carried with Him of removing the occasion of the misery, left His heart still the seat of present compassion with it. It was so in the case of sending out the Apostles. He was about to give them pastors according to His own heart; but looking on them as sheep that had no shepherd, He had compassion on the multitudes. It was so again in His feeding the people. He was about to give them bread enough and to spare, but on seeing them, He had compassion (Matthew 16:32).

No prospect of the future, be it as bright and certain as it may, can rightly close the heart to the claims of the present. The follower of Christ will “weep,” as he enters the house of mourning, or the chamber of death, though he know that the power of resurrection, in season, will close the scene in all its own magnificence and joy.

With this sympathy and this power over the cause of sorrow, we see, moreover, the instructions of wisdom, and the lessons of God conveyed through this sorrow.

Martha speaks of her grief to the Lord. And much ignorance is expressed through the natural, and in some sense pardonable, exercises of her wounded heart. But Jesus teaches her the way of God more perfectly. He lets the light of some wondrous truths break in upon her soul, ■ truths deeper and more precious than what the hours of her undisturbed ease and happiness had been able to discover. The light of the day of prosperity had not shown her what Jesus now brought with Him in this night of weeping. She is made to see some bright shining’s of the glory of God through the tears of that sorrow, through that gloom of death which had entered her dwelling. “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

The place was, indeed, a sanctuary; and Jesus Himself treads softly. He wept. He owned the claim of such a moment. But it was a spot for Him to cultivate also. It was a garden of the Lord’s; and He enriches it with fresh fruit and growth of knowledge.

Again, let me say of this affecting scene, that it is made productive to others also. Many believe, when they witness how the grace and power of the Lord had dealt with this sorrow. “Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.”

I ask, is not all this as much the history of this our day, as it was of the day of Martha and Mary? Who need live long or travel far, to know that the sorrows of the saints still draw the willing visits of Christ? And that, during such visits, He sympathizes and teaches? Who, I ask, need live long or travel far in order to know this? Gracious it is in the Spirit, and precious to us, to have the record of

such things in the book “written for our learning.” But is it less gracious in Him, or less precious to us, that these things are not merely the things of history, but the common things of experience and observation?

And further: this sorrow is the occasion of fresh acts of supplication and of worship. “Father, I thank Thee, that Thou hast heard Me,” said the Lord. And is this at all more strange, or less a matter of experience than the others? What say our own souls?

‘Trials make the promise sweet,

Trials give new life to prayer,

Trials bring me to His feet,

Lay me low, and keep me there.’

This is not history, but experience. It is not the light of other days which, as we hear, was wont to cheer the night of weeping, or the house of mourning, but the light which, as we know, is still wont to hold its court and display its power, in the dark valley, and in the shadow of death.

I am bold also to add another thought—a thought, too, lately made very precious to my own heart—that the blessed Lord, in unjealous love, allows both our sorrows and our mercies to be just links between Himself and our poor hearts.

The widow of Sarepta was afresh bound to the Prophet, when she received her son from the dead. Her joy in one she so loved being restored to her acted as another link of tenderest and yet strongest texture between her heart and the man of God, the witness of Christ. And the Spirit allowed it, I am sure (1 Kings 17:24). So, in much later days, the Lord allowed His servants to be thankful and take courage, on seeing brethren again after a long separation, though during that separation he had enjoyed His presence and encouragements in a sweet and large measure (Acts 28). And so here: receiving their brother from the dead, the dear family at Bethany are more than ever in devotedness the Lord’s. In the power and joy of resurrection they sit with Him (ch. 12:1). They delight in Him afresh through the mercy which their common, natural, human feelings had received. They rejoice in Him who is “the resurrection and the life.”

Christ in Us

THE grace of God filling the heart with Christ, alone enables us to give up self, and its idols; and the more filled we are with Him, and His grace and truth, the more readily and thoroughly can we yield up all that His eye condemns. For it is only as led by the “God of all grace” that we can really go down, really be nothing, or really admit all His rebukes, and the hollowness of all His grace has not given. Christ enters, and all that cannot live in His company goes out. Slowly it may be unwilling to yield possession but the inflowing of blessing through the knowledge and power of Christ, must cleanse the heart, while filling it.

This is indeed a process, not a thing done at once, once for all. There is conflict. There are sad advantages often gained by the enemy. But just as Christ enters and abides, dwelling in the heart by faith so are the many traffickers driven outside, and kept outside. Yea, so full may the blessing be, that the enemy may be driven away from the gate. The devil flees from us, because he not only has no place within, but because he is resisted in the power of Christ, and for Christ’s sake. Then there is peace and joy around as well as within. The coasts enlarge; “His branches shall spread;” and “they that dwell under His shadow shall return.”

LET our weakness humble us and cast us upon God; but let it not induce unbelief, and so set us against God.

Leviticus 3 and 7

THE Lord Jehovah is emphatically called the GOD OF PEACE. He gave His only begotten Son to make peace between guilty sinners and Himself. We have not now to seek terms of reconciliation, or to make search for an acceptable offering, for God has provided all in the “Lamb without spot;” who is now, preached by the Holy Ghost as having made peace through the blood of His cross.” The Lord Jesus is both the Offering and Offerer, for He gave Himself for our sins■ He “offered Himself without spot to God”■He is the infinitely acceptable Peace-offering, and therefore the everlastingly efficacious Peace-maker. Immanuel is most truly the Panics OF PEACE, whose entrance into this world was celebrated by the multitude of the heavenly host, singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and ON EARTH PEACE, good-will toward men.” How wonderful that God the Judge of all, the holy and just God, should be the Author, and sole source of peace to the conscience of the sinner and ungodly! But so it is. The Son of God delighted to make known the “gospel of peace,” and to dispense glad tidings of good things to the distressed and guilty sinner; and all His ways were but the overflowing of a full cup of peace to all believers■ “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”

None could make peace with God, but the Holy One of God■ “the man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts”■and He alone could satisfy all the demands of divine justice, and the sternest requirements of perfect holiness, by virtue of what He Himself was. The unspotted and undefiled Saviour—God manifest in the flesh, infinite as to capacity, perfect as to purity, within and without, ■the Eternal Life which was with the Father■was able to offer to God an all-sufficient ransom, and drink up all the suffering and wrath our sins justly merited at the hands of God. And this He did (which none other could) when He offered Himself “once for all” without the gate. It was there the Peace-offering was killed, there the blood was sprinkled, and there the fat, &c., (the inward richness and value of the victim,) was tried by fire, duly estimated, and found to be a sweet savor (a savor of rest) unto the Lord. The unalterable tale of redeeming love, that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, was there told out. From that fountain of living waters, all the ransomed myriads drink eternal blessings. From that altar they learn the new song, and, in the perpetual remembrance and ceaseless apprehension of its everlasting value, they will sing before the throne, “Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood,” &c. It is in the midst of the throne of heaven that the Lamb slain is now known■accepted and glorified at God’s right hand. After having offered one sacrifice for sins forever, He sat down. Rejected by earth, He was welcomed in heaven, highly exalted, and crowned with glory and Honor. Hence the narrative of the Peace-offering concludes “a sweet savor unto the Lord.” Here God can rest concerning His people, and here the soul of a believing sinner rests also, as we sometimes sing,

“Here we rest, in wonder viewing

All our sins on Jesus laid;

And behold redemption flowing

From the sacrifice He made.”

God is now, therefore, “preaching peace by Jesus Christ” ■an already accomplished peace■both to Jews and Gentiles: peace by faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Rom. 5:1,)■peace with God, who justifies from all things through what Christ has done (Acts 13:39); peace in the heart and mind, because God declares that the blood of (the offering) Jesus Christ, His Son cleanseth us from all sin-it once and forever purges the conscience, which nothing else can do (Heb. 10:2).

Peace, peace,

O how sweet a thing is peace!

Blessed it is thus to know God in the slain and unblemished offering! It is not a question of attainment on our part, but a past transaction, a settled fact, known to faith, that Christ has made peace, and that God has accepted it with delight on our behalf: it was most truly a sweet savor unto the Lord.

In the burnt-offering, all the offering was consumed upon the altar, because it represented Jehovah’s righteous Servant wholly, unceasingly, and unreservedly, surrendering Himself unto God, even unto death, that by the obedience of One many might be made righteous. Not so, however, the peace-offering; but, as we have seen, God had (so to speak) His part, the worshipper fed on his part, while the wave breast and heave shoulder afforded food for the priests; thus showing us, very blessedly, the position of fellowship with God and with one another which the accomplished peace of the Lamb slain has introduced us into. Oh, to be able, by the Holy Ghost, to realize more of this true fellowship! What unfathomable depths of love are here! The far off made nigh by the blood of Christ! What a nearness! What an intimacy of holy union. Infinite love providing a perfect offering to establish an everlasting covenant of peace between God and sinful men. Hence the Spirit’s pledge, “Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.” Happy those, who, in the clear consciousness of having believingly laid their hands on this all-sufficient Offering, can say,

Peace with our holy God,

Peace from the fear of death,

Peace through the Saviour’s precious blood,

Sweet peace, the fruit of faith!

It is well to observe, that fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another, is the result of the accepted Peace-offering; and that fellowship consists in the true estimate of this peace. It is entirely spiritual, and its experimental enjoyment is the communion of the Holy Ghost, who takes of Christ’s and spews unto us. It is God, and Christ, and the purged worshipper, finding rest and satisfaction in the Peace-offering■thinking of, estimating, and enjoying the work of peace together. This is fellowship. God is glorified, and the sinner saved. Sin is blotted out, and the sinner justified. All is peace. “Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” God finds peace in the offering touching our sins; He rests peacefully toward us in the sweet-smelling savor. Christ sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied; not one is lost of all that the Father gave Him. At His own supper with His

disciples, the very Sacrifice for sin, the Offerer, the Priest who entered into heaven by His own blood, gave thanks, and dipped with His disciples in the same dish: and, doubtless, when we assemble in His precious name, thus to remember Him, He not only says to us, "PEACE be unto you," while chewing us His hands and His side, and welcomes us with, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;" but He Himself, in the unchangeableness of His own perfect love, cannot but dip with us again in the dish, and take peculiar delight in the glorious character of the peace He has made. Well might He say to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I GIVE unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." Wondrous peace! God and Christ and the believer feeding together, finding refreshment and rest in the same blessed fountain, secured forever through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.

May we have grace, beloved, to eat the Peace-offering as purged and welcomed worshippers: and know the joy of feeding on Him who rose again from the dead on the third day.

2 Samuel 6

ONE of the first cares of David, after he had been acknowledged king by the tribes at large, was to see after the Ark of God, and to place it near him (Psalm 132). It must have remained at Kirjath-jearim, in the house of Abinidab, near about 100 years, under the care, most probably, of the priests. It would appear that the solemn scene which had been enacted at Bethshemesh, on the occasion of its being brought back by the milch trine from the land of the Philistines, when the people were slain for looking into it (1 Sam. 6:19), had been forgotten; for in David's first attempt, he does not appear to have been impressed with a seriousness suitable to the occasion. We do not read of his seeking the mind and help of God in the matter, but we are told that "David (1 Chron. 13:1) consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader;" even the priests seem not to have come into his mind. The pride and pomp of earthly glory cannot stand before the Ark of the Lord of Hosts. Humility and self-loathing became David, rather than the clank of arms, and the pomp and circumstance of war. But his mistake was soon made manifest. Uzzah put forth his hand to the Ark of God, for the oxen shook it, and "there he died before God." We also, as Christians, are often under the chastisement of God for handling His things with a merely human touch in the energy of the flesh. Such, then, was the sorrowful failure of his first attempt, made in the presence of the whole congregation of Israel (1 Chron. 13:4, 5). It had been undertaken with an arm of flesh, and closed with a catastrophe which changed the current of David's thoughts (1 Chron. 13:11, 12). He became displeased and afraid of God, and turned the Ark aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Such is often our case. We begin with fleshly joy to undertake the things of God, and we finish with discontent, and charge God with the failure.

Nevertheless, in the things in which David was true., the Lord still went with him. We find from 1 Chronicles 14 that He gave him meanwhile victory over the Philistines, and that "his fame went out into all lands," &c. It may be that this experience of the Lord's goodness to him, in circumstances of difficulty, wrought upon his heart, in causing him to inquire into the reason of his failure. It is often so. Conflict with the enemy is made a means of restoration of soul. Perhaps Psalms 132 was composed under such feelings. Be this as it may, he addresses himself a second time to the bringing in of the Ark: he prepares a place for it, well assured that the Lord would now help. He finds from the Word (and oh! what abundant instances have we of the neglect of the Word even in the palmiest days of Israel) that the Levites were to carry the Ark, and we hear no further of any consultation with the chiefs. He receives the chastisement from the band of the Lord, and acknowledges, that because He had not been sought after the due order, this breach had been upon them. So, at last, the Ark rests safely in the tent that he had prepared for it.

Meanwhile, let us regard the state of soul in which David went through this solemn yet festive scene. We are told (2 Sam. 6:14), that "David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod." What a crucifixion to the flesh must this have been Amid all that multitude, with every eye upon him, to leave the place and state of a king, and to become a dancing priest! This must, indeed, have surprised the warriors, whose ranks he had quitted to play such a part. And is it not to be so with us? What a poor thing is intellectual conception of truth,

without fellowship with it in our own persons. David felt that it became him to put off the state of a warrior before “the Lord of Hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.” He would, at such a moment, know no power but His. But how impossible is it to do this by the mere abstract sense of the greatness of God, unless we understand our relationship to Him. It is by the cross that we are now related to Him, and it is a sense of the depth of Christ’s humiliation there, that can alone enable us to take a low a very loft place. Oh! that we may study Him in His humiliation for us, and so learn our own nothingness.

This acting of David may remind us of beautiful touches in our Lord’s life, where we see Him occupied with other objects, and in a different train of thought, from the busy crowd around Him; and, so to speak, spoiling the day to them, as David did to Michel. There is the case of the Syrophenician woman, in Matthew 15 The wish of the disciples was that she should be sent away, for “she crieth after us.” They were in no mood for her company; but the Lord found in her a truly bright example of faith. Still more pertinent is the case of blind Bartimeus. The human dignity with which the unstable multitude had invested Jesus for the moment, did not allow of a conversation with a mendicant, who, as a well-known person, had often been passed unnoticed by the giddy crowd. “They charged him to hold his peace.” But Jesus never forgot Himself: He was always about His Father’s business: and He found in this poor man also one of His great triumphs. Just as uncongenial was David’s conduct, to Michel, the daughter of Saul, his wife. Her flesh had been sadly stirred at the sight of David her husband dancing before the Ark. She had looked out of a window to admire him as a king, but instead “she despised him in her heart.” She was utterly ignorant of the grace which had brought him there, and thought that he had shamefully demeaned himself. The false dignity of the flesh is ever thus stirred by the self-abasement which a sight of the glory produces. Hear his blessed answer to her charge of his “shamelessly uncovering himself, as one of the vain fellows:” “It was,” said he, “before the Lord...and I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight.” How thoroughly was he impressed with the nothingness, as to himself, into which grace had brought him!

In some of the doings of David here, there is an interesting fore-tracing of what will surely happen in the coming dispensation, as to the Melchisedec kingdom and priesthood of Christ. In Zechariah, it is said of Christ, “He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” That is, as some expound, the exercise of both functions shall be in use. Now, David is clearly a priest in this scene. He “was clothed with a robe of fine linen” (1 Chron. 15:27), and was “girded with a linen ephod” (2 Sam. 6:14). After the bringing in of the Ark, “he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts,” and “he dealt among all the people to everyone a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh,”&c.; that is, he took upon himself the Melchisedec functions of coming forth, dealing out refreshment, and blessing the people (compare Gen. 14). “Then,” we are significantly told, (2 Sam. 6:20,) “David returned to bless his household.” Nothing can be more expressive of the distinction which will prevail in the Millennium between the kingdom and the Church or Household (Eph. 2:19). As soon as He has settled the affairs of the former, He will return to some other place, like David, to bless His Church already at rest. So also the carrying aside of the Ark into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, between the failure in the first attempt, and his success in the second, is not without its meaning; for although the name Obed-edom was doubtless in use among the Hebrews, yet Obed-edom the Gittite, or man from Oath, is strongly expressive of a Gentile house, and the sojourning of the Ark there, and the

blessing of his house in consequence; for “it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the Ark of God,” forcibly reminds us of part of Romans 11, in which we are told that the Gentiles are blessed during the casting off of the Jews, and these latter are thereby provoked to jealousy. “I say, then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness?” The true Ark shall yet return to the Jewish house. “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

TEMPTATION. ■ I have been thinking how it is that temptation so often comes over us with such sudden power, and the preparedness of Christ when Satan came to try Him. I feel and think, that it arises much from our judgment not having become established in times of quietness. Christ answered as one who had not then to think, but to communicate judgment long since formed and settled. May the Lord grant that we may thus use leisure, to prepare the feelings of the soul to meet Satan with a realized answer, however varied the temptations may be; and this can only be, by dwelling in the heart and mind of Jesus, as He dwelt in His Father’s.

THE DAY OF REOKONING. ■ The controversy between a Christian and the world cannot be settled until the appearing of the Lord Jesus. To His tribunal the Christian can, through grace, commit his cause. Can the worldling do as much?

1 Samuel 1-4

ISRAEL had long provoked the Most High. Time after time had they fallen under the power of the enemy, and again and again had the God of Jacob delivered them. But they rebelled still; and a universal turning away from God specially marks the last days of Eli, though one and another are in the secret of the Lord, and appear as solitary witnesses of the truth amidst the thousands of Israel.

Religious ceremonies, however, were still observed, sacrifices were often offered, and the Aaronic order and office of priesthood also still had a place. But the days of the long-suffering of Jehovah were nearer to a close than many imagined: for no forms of religion, even though of divine institution, are acceptable to God, further than they are connected with subjection of heart to Him. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 15:23). Where the form of godliness is upheld, and the power thereof denied, God must turn away from it, as He also commands us (2 Tim. 3:5).

There is nothing in this sad and solemn narrative to lead us to suppose that Eli was in any respect, as a son of Aaron, naturally disqualified for the office of Priest, or that he was wanting in the regular observance of the forms and ceremonies connected with his office, or that he was guilty of any outward act of flagrant evil. He judged Israel forty years, and therefore must have had much experience as a ruler of the house of God; and we find he was ready to rebuke drunkenness, or to give a benediction, as circumstances appeared to call for either. But with all this, how stood his own heart with God? What was his behavior in his family? and what were his principles of action towards the people among whom he officially acted as the servant of God? Healthful inquiries! and needful too concerning ourselves, if we would have a just estimate and measure of our own hearts and ways.

A great discovery was made, when the Lord searched Eli. It was found that he did not guard the sacrifice. It was handled with rude and unclean hands, to suit the lawless appetites of the sons of Belial; and he did not hinder them. This was indeed a sorrowful disclosure, and betrayed great distance of heart from God; for all spiritual comfort and strength depend upon our estimate of GOD'S SACRIFICE, as one has written,

'What think you of Christ? is the test

To try both your state and your scheme,' &c.

And I would ask, how can holiness be developed, if that sacrifice, which presents to the soul the love and glory of Jehovah, be not revered and guarded with jealous watchfulness? Can peace, communion, or acceptable service be found, where the heart is careless of what is precious to God? Assuredly not; for the flesh and blood of the "Lamb without spot" is the sole source of all spiritual life and power. A knowledge of manifested sin, and some readiness to rebuke it in others may exist, but the conscience cannot rightly be affected by it, if GOD'S SACRIFICE be thought little of.

It was the sacrifice in Eli's day that was the touchstone, even as the cross of the Son of God is now. Everything depends on what our thoughts are of that cross. The suffering, death, shedding of blood, and burning of the fat of the guiltless victim, presented no attraction to revolted Israel. They knew no better use of it than for carnal gratification; and even Eli had his conscience so little exercised, as to the spiritual character of the feast which was daily presented on the altar, that he contented himself with the bare mention of the notoriously wicked course of his sons, instead of frowning upon them (ch. 3:13, margin) and exercising the godly discipline which such abominations called for. "His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." He felt it was for present ease to let things have their course, and was content to do so, rather than faithfully oppose and withstand the desires and purposes of those evil workers. And how could it be otherwise, if the eye were closed to the glory and beauty of the sacrifice? Had he believingly traced, in the sufferings and death of the offerings, their great antitype—God manifest in the flesh—he could not but have keenly felt the dishonor done to God, and would doubtless also have gathered up strength to fight against and subdue his natural flesh and bone. How vividly does this little history bring before us the need of a deep, experimental, heartfelt acquaintance with the sacrifice of the Son of God, to enable us to fight the good fight of faith, and overcome the adversary, even in the home circle!

Such conduct, however, cannot be passed over by Him who says, "He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Accordingly, "a man of God" is stirred up to meet Eli with words of solemn rebuke, and awful threatening, and especially because of GOD'S SACRIFICE and God's offering being so despised. But the censure is unheeded. Neither Eli nor Israel appear either abased or alarmed: and no mention is made of individual or united humiliation or confession. The Lord's rebuke to the unhumiliated heart is like a gust of wind that has passed over the unyielding rock; for being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, it remains unmoved, unimpressed, unbroken. The tremendous rebuke and threatening of God, however, again vibrate on the ear of the aged priest, through the lips of the child Samuel, but again with apparently little effect. The heathen Ninevites might surely reprove such impenitence. Ah! Israel's priest little knew that the Lord loveth judgment, and that if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.

But the Ark was to be guarded as well as the Sacrifice. No one in Israel had access to it but the high priest, and he only once a year; and no one had liberty to pack it up in the holy cloths, when the camp removed, but Aaron or his sons; and no one was permitted to bear it but the Kohathites, who were commanded not to touch any holy thing on penalty of death (Num. 4:5-15). But secret faults unjudged will sooner or later merge into presumptuous sins. Eli had not made the holy preservation of the Sacrifice a matter of conscience, and therefore the mercy-seat and cherubim of glory had little place in his affections.

Revolted and self-willed Israel, instead of mourning at home (as they will by and by), their wives apart and their families apart (Zech. 12.), presumptuously "go out against the Philistines to battle," and Eli does not condemn their course. But though the people have turned away from God, they are still professedly religious, but make a shadow their refuge, instead of Jehovah, in time of trouble. And the sons of Belial, who had trampled upon the work of atonement unrestrained, now fearlessly indulge their sacrilegious desires. They handle the Ark of the covenant with defiled and guilty hands, tear it from its accustomed resting-place, and rudely expose it to the unbelieving gam of the provokers of Jehovah.

Ask not how this unprecedented outrage was met by Eli; for unfaithfulness as to ourselves must ever be accompanied with unfaithfulness to others; and if ungodliness is unrestrained at home, how can holiness be contended for amongst the ranks of the thousands of Israel? The same false charity that could be silent at dishonor to God touching His Sacrifice, can now without rebuke, see the precious Ark sacrilegiously abused: while the conscience, blunted as to family rule and behavior, can easily accommodate itself to public position and conduct. I cannot help thinking that, in the mind of the Spirit, there is an intentional connection in this narrative between family and public witness for God; and that both are dependent on the estimate formed of God's own Sacrifice.

Eli, however, could not now occupy his accustomed place in the temple; and the feeble patriarch, trembling for the Ark of God, sat by the wayside watching. But having refused to judge himself, he must now be judged; and so also must his wicked sons, and backslidden Israel. The result was, Eli was visited with sudden death, his two sons killed, Israel smitten before their enemies, and the precious Ark of the covenant taken by the uncircumcised enemies of the Lord. It is indeed an awful story; but if it serve to stir us up to regard God's Sacrifice with more holy reverence and fear, and to beget in us watchfulness against the workings of the untrue charity of nature, it will not be without profit to our souls. Let us never forget these statutes of the Lord, "Them that Honor Me, I will Honor; and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

All Saints

IT is the peculiar privilege and portion of God's children to have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them. They know that they have passed from death unto life, because they love the brethren. None else can truly say, that they have experienced a saving change of heart. All who love God love the brethren also. There may be various degrees of this divine love, but still God's love is "shed abroad" in the heart. Jesus only, has fully manifested its boundless extent. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." What searching words are these! "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Again, "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." The absence of this would show the absence of the knowledge of God.

This being so, how important it is that the children of God should exhibit this divine love in an unmistakable manner. The love of the Father includes all the redeemed. True brotherly love embraces all the brethren. Such is the compass and quality of Gospel love. We should guard against the counterfeit, and any feeling that would hinder our giving the right hand of fellowship to all the brethren of Christ. The language of Ruth to Naomi was, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Jesus said to Mary, "Go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God." When the flowing forth of brotherly affection is confined to narrower limits than these, so that we cannot take into our hearts all that know and love Christ, we may well apply to ourselves this question, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" If we love any because they belong to our party, and follow us, it is not a divine emotion, and, to say the least, is too impure to be worthy of the name of love. It is love in the flesh, having no heavenly character. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?" We should regard and value our brethren, not on the ground of attainment, relative, or church connection; but because they belong to Christ. The name of Jesus is above every name, and has the first claim on our hearts (See Matthew 10:40-42; 25:35-46).

How amazing is this divine love! It amounts to this, the Father loves the children as He loves His only begotten Son (John 17:23). Jesus loves them as the Father loves Him (John. 15:9). What a mystery! What infinite depths are here! Truly the love of God passeth knowledge! Should we not, in the words of Paul, salute all the holy brethren ■ "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Such, indeed, should be the abiding atmosphere of our souls. In Paul's Epistles he carefully maintains this universal brotherhood: he was emphatically the Apostle of unity. James enquires, from whence come wars and fighting's among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members? Paul salutes all saints, and sends love from all saints to all saints (See Romans 16:15; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Phil. 4:22; Heb. 13:24). He thus keeps up an unbroken family link. Though many failures existed among them, yet they were Christ's sheep, and to be loved for His sake. He thus exhorts the Ephesian Saints, "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all Saints." He ceased not to give thanks for them, when he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and

love unto all the Saints (ch. 1:15). He thanks his God, that Philon was endowed with these two cardinal fruits of the Spirit which are so sweetly linked in scripture, ■ faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all Saints. He also thanks God for the Colossians, that they possessed them (Col. 1:2). Christ and His sheep are inseparably one. Our love to Him is measured by our love to them. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Again, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34).

Our lack in these days of true brotherly affection is very great: hence our lack of testimony to the world, our loss of blessing within, and the root of most of our sorrows, divisions, and shame. In early days it was remarked how much the Christians loved one another. The union of Christ's sheep is very dear to His heart. It was the substance of His memorable intercession (John 17) just previous to His death. The care and feeding of them also filled His mind on the eve of His ascent to glory ■ "Feed my sheep" ■ "Feed my lambs," &c. &c., lie pressed three times on Peter. The three epistles of John breathe the spirit of His Master. May the deep consciousness of our failures send us to the throne of grace, there to supplicate Him who is love, that we might be filled with love. He giveth more grace. He giveth liberally. Let us ask in faith, deeply feeling our need of this family affection. As we grow in love we rise above our differences and party walls. Then do we discover a beauty and value in the weakest lamb of Christ's fold, which endears him to our hearts. Were we to regard God's people more in relation to what they are in Christ, and less in relation to what they are in themselves, we should find our love so kindled and stirred up, that it would freely flow and entwine around all the beloved family. There is nothing more precious than brotherly love, and to experience these words of the Psalmist, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa. 133:1). I conclude with these remarkable words of the beloved John ■ "And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:21).

Psalms 73

IN this precious Psalm the man of God looks on the world around through the windows of his sanctuary, i.e. through the eyes of Christ. And this, beloved, is our only safe way of contemplating all around, and ourselves as amidst it all. The true light then shines on all. The spiritual man discerneth all things.

But looking out of the window is not our only, or our chief employ in our blessed sanctuary. There are holy treasures within which should engage and fill our hearts and minds. The Father, His counsels, and His love■Jesus, His grace, and His glory■the family of God, with all the peace, joy, and love of the fellowship of saints. What heart can trace, what tongue can tell the blessedness of the objects found within! Praise, intercession, prayer; the word, too, and that Holy Anointing pervading all, even the Spirit of God Himself, who interpreteth all to our souls in love!

Oh! let us then live amidst these holy things, suing, dwelling with Jesus. And when He leads us to look outward on the scenes around, we shall do so in fellowship with Him. Then shall we anew bless Him for that word■ “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Anew praise Him for having redeemed us to God by His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father!

In all these things we should seek to be led by His word; seeking to read it all in communion with Him whose word it is. Not making a Bible of our own out of a part of the word, but reading it all as “written” and at the feet of Jesus, taught by His Spirit. Then shall we look upward, forward, backward, around, inward, just as His own word, opened to us by the Spirit of truth and grace, leads our souls.

Joseph in Potiphar's House, and in Prison

OUR last paper closed with the inconsolable grief of Jacob, at the supposed death of his favorite son, and with Joseph being sold into Egypt as a bondservant. The deception practiced by Jacob upon his father was thus, many years afterward, visited upon himself by his own children, in the falsehood they acted respecting the death of Joseph. God is a God of recompences. He shows us our nature portrayed in our offspring; and often does He recall to our remembrance, by the conduct of those closely connected with us, evil ways of which we ourselves have been guilty in time past.

Joseph was carried into Egypt, and sold by the Ishmaelites to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. The Ishmaelites were, in a certain sense, allied to Israel, through their joint fore-father Abraham; and through Hagar they were also connected with Egypt, and became a channel of communication between the two. The Midianites, descendants of Abraham by Keturah, were concerned in the purchase of Joseph; both tribes are again linked together in oppressing Israel (compare Jude 7 and,7:24). How far the result of one act of unbelief may extend! What a harvest of evil one little seed may generate! Abraham's faith had failed during the famine, as related in Gen. 12:12-44, he goes down into Egypt, Hagar is there procured, the birth of Ishmael is the result; and now we find the descendants of this child of the flesh purchasing, for a few pieces of silver, one of the choicest of Abraham's promised seed.

"The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." His sojourn in Potiphar's house was like the stay of the Ark, in subsequent times, in the house of Obed-edom. The presence of the living God was there, and all was blessing. But the prosperity of Joseph was not merely his rise, as to outward circumstances, he was also prospering in his soul. The Lord was with him, and strengthened him to withstand the fierce temptation through which he had to pass. It was the purpose of God that this faithful one should have service of a higher character than the mere stewardship of Potiphar's house. He intended to use Joseph in dealing with the souls of his brethren; and, moreover, he was to succeed to princely dominion. In order to be qualified for such exalted service, he must himself pass through deep exercise of soul. His acquaintance with his own heart, and with sin, as viewed in the sight of God, must be deepened if he would deal in a godly way with the hearts and sins of others. In order fitly to dispense God's mercies to the needy, his own faith and dependence on God had to be matured; and that he might occupy the place of power, to which he was destined by the counsel of God, and, at the same time, preserve his lowliness of spirit, and be still the Lord's servant, he had to pass through other periods of deep trial, and be raised a second time out of a kind of living tomb. Death and resurrection are the great truths which, when realized by faith, qualify the people of God for His service. To sow in hope, and patiently wait for the harvest, trusting that He who raiseth the dead, will, in due time, give the seed to the sower—to know of no extremity beyond the reach of God's wisdom and grace—to labor on, seeking no present reward but the consciousness of pleasing Him—are some of the blessed results of faith to be sought by those who desire truly to serve the Lord.

The whole history of Joseph abounds in displays of God's skillfulness in causing blessing, and life, and strength to spring out of circumstances of the deepest sorrow and trial; and one chief exercise of our faith, as children and servants of God, should be, in the knowledge of Him as the God of resurrection, even in our most ordinary circumstances. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are glorious facts, not to be confined, as to faith, to the matter of our salvation only, but we should seek power from God to bring these great truths into daily use. In difficulties and dangers, in trials and temptations, in afflictions and necessities, the cross and glory of Our Lord are to be our strength, help, and deliverance; and we shall find how these blessed truths are made, by the Spirit to pervade, as it were, the Word of God.

The Lord was with Joseph when subjected to this sore and oft-repeated temptation, and enabled him to resist; at the same time, his soul was evidently being deepened in the truth that sin, as to its great wickedness, is against God. Of this he seems to have been, in measure, ignorant in his previous history, when he brought the evil report of his brethren to Jacob. Had he then viewed sin as against God, and not simply as an offense against their father, and their father's name, he would have mourned over it, and have dealt in secret with God respecting it, instead of becoming a tale-bearer to Jacob. Now, however, he was able to take the right course in this temptation. He recognized the hand of the Lord as having placed him in his present circumstances of prosperity; that he was standing in the presence of the living God, and was His servant; against God, therefore, would be the sin if he were to commit it. His brethren had manifested their rebellion and unbelief of God. How could he follow their example? They had taken their father's "ewe lamb and slain it; "how could he deal in the same evil way with his master? The circumstances of David's sin, and subsequent confession, forcibly present themselves to our minds whilst meditating on this history of Joseph's temptation; they have, however, been alluded to already in a previous paper.

Joseph was subjected to a still more severe trial—he was unjustly accused to Potiphar of having attempted to commit the very sin which he had, through the grace of God, been enabled so steadily to resist. No reproach, however, escapes his lips; neither does he attempt to vindicate himself: for he could only have done so at the expense of another. He commits his cause in silence to Him that judgeth righteously. "Surely my judgment is with my God." Many a saint will resist a temptation of the former kind, but is unable to stand when falsely accused. Job was upright in his ways, and blameless as to yielding to the lusts of the flesh; but when unjust reproaches and suspicions were cast at him by his friends, then the evil of his heart was aroused, and he sought to justify himself, almost at the expense of the character of God. Joseph, on the other hand, was preserved from making any self-defense, by the conviction that the Lord was with him. He had referred the question of sin to God, he is able also to leave his own character in the safe keeping of God. How glorious is this triumph of faith; how like the ways of Him who did no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, riled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously (1 Peter 2:22, 23). The 39th Psalm beautifully pour-trays the conduct of one in similar circumstances. The presence of the wicked keeps the mouth of the Psalmist closed, lest he should sin with his tongue; at length, unable any longer to restrain, he pours forth his heart in secret to God ■ "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." Thus he desires to be instructed as to the vanity of the creature, and, therefore, as to the impotence of his enemies, by learning how frail he himself is. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee." Since he

waits on God, and all his expectation is from Him, there is no necessity for his attempting his own deliverance. Finally, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it." The whole is traced to the hand of God, and this is an additional and conclusive reason for silence. May we be apt scholars in this particular school of faith!

In consequence of this false accusation Joseph is cast into prison; "But the Lord was with Joseph, and sheaved him mercy." "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." And thus, whether the captive slave in Potiphar's house, or the prisoner in the dungeon, Joseph takes the lead, and becomes the master in both places; the ungodly are made to perceive that the favor of the Lord rested upon him. And now another exercise of heart awaits him. His sympathies are to be drawn out towards those who are subjected to the same captivity with himself. Grief is naturally selfish, and unless the sufferer is able by faith to cast his care and sorrow on God, he will be so occupied with his own trials as to be unable to enter with true sympathy into the distresses of others. Every one also thinks his own affliction the heaviest, and this common habit of the soul steels it against entering into the sorrows of others. It was not so, however, with Joseph; he had been able to commit his ways to the Lord, and he had also cast all his care on Him, so that he was not unmindful of the grief of those around him. He is quick to perceive the sad countenances of two of his fellow-prisoners (no strange sight we should have thought in a prison); and yet this man of faith had found himself so happy in the Lord's company, even then, that he cannot but notice the fallen countenances of two of his companions. "Wherefore look ye so sadly today?" Elijah had not faith to commit his trouble and danger to the Lord, he fled in terror from the sword of Jezebel; and the consequence was, that instead of taking the place of intercession with God, on behalf of the people of Israel, he made intercession against them. He was so engrossed by his own trial, that he had no heart for the miseries of others. On the other hand, the blessed Lord could weep over Jerusalem, although well aware that they would shortly be His betrayers and murderers. We shall find enlargement of heart towards the Church of God, and also toward an ungodly and perishing world, just in proportion as we are assured of our own rest in the heart of God, and are able to cast our every care and burden upon Him. This sympathy of Joseph for the two prisoners opens the way for him also to proclaim to them the name of the Lord. "Do not interpretations belong to God?" And thus he was enabled to lead their souls to the right path; namely, to faith and dependence on God. Surely he did not neglect to speak to them of the living God, who had given not only the interpretation but the dream itself; and who had foreknown and appointed the circumstances that were thus revealed to them before-hand. So will it come to pass with ourselves. Let our hearts be increasingly open to the sorrows and miseries of others, and we shall find that the Lord will thereby open to us a very blessed way of testifying to them His truth. We shall find the fitting opportunities of revealing to them the secrets of God—the great mysteries of His salvation. Men are living in a dream, like these servants of Pharaoh, and often earnestly desire an interpreter; hopes and fears flit before the soul like the visions of the night; and who can tell the interpretation of the future but those who, like Joseph, are walking with God, and have already found salvation through the death of Christ? Have we not, in the history of these two dreamers, a striking intimation of what is about to happen? "Yet, within three days," the one was exalted to be near the king, the other was lifted up to suffer the penalty of the curse. The resurrection day draweth nigh, when those who have been ordained in the sovereignty of God's grace unto eternal life, will be raised in glory; but the ungodly will receive the sentence of perdition, of which already they have been warned.

This remarkable interference of God, in favor of Joseph, seems to have been too much for his faith; he begins to judge by sight, and not by faith; and so he trusts in the memory and gratitude of the chief butler, instead of still placing his sole reliance for deliverance on the Lord. The two remarkable dreams which he was enabled so truly to interpret, and the fulfillment of which was so fixed in his soul, that he speaks to the chief butler in full assurance as to the future, should have been the means of strengthening his own trust in the Lord; and he should have remembered his own former visions of glory, and have patiently waited for the time when God would as surely fulfill what he had then promised. But the temptation of having a friend who could speak to Pharaoh was too great; the means of escape seemed to be within his own attainment, and he looked upon the prison bars and bolts to be withdrawn rather at the bidding of Pharaoh than at the command of the Lord of Hosts. How little are we to be trusted with our own matters; how quick are we to discern a fancied way of escape that suits our own thoughts and counsels, and how slow to trust the deep and unsearchable wisdom, and mighty power, of the living God!

“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forget him.” What is the value of man’s gratitude, or of man’s remembrance? Fickle, changeable, selfish, and engrossed with the circumstance of the present moment, man has no continuance; there is no certainty in his promises, no endurance in his ways. “Cursed the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh.” Such must have been Joseph’s condition when the year rolled on; and again, another passed, and no notice was taken of him, still a prisoner unjustly confined. His expectations withered—hope deferred must have made his heart sick; and this was, doubtless, the most trying period which he ever experienced. To be apparently so near to release, and then to be so grievously disappointed; to find that he had leant upon a broken reed, and to perceive no symptoms of God’s interference in his favor. How all these, and a thousand more, perplexing thoughts must have passed through his mind! It was the purpose of God, to teach him the experience so blessedly set forth in the 62nd Psalm—to wait, and to trust only in God. To have no expectation but from Him, no refuge but in Him, (mark how often the word only is repeated in this beautiful psalm). It is to this period of the history of Joseph that verse 19 of Psalms 105 seems to refer, “until the time that His word came; the word of the Lord tried him.” He was tried as to whether he could rest assuredly on the word of the Lord, or whether he looked to other sources of help and deliverance. The human aid, on which for a while he depended, was made to fail: and then the word of the Lord alone must have been his confidence. And is not this also the way of our God and Father in dealing with us, His children? Does He not instruct us “to hope and quietly wait for His salvation,” whether as to our circumstances here, or our glory that is to come? Many a hope and trust in man, or in our own counsels, does lie frustrate and disappoint, in order that we may learn to trust only in Him, and to rely upon His word. “Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity.” “In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God.”

Seeking Knowledge

I am desirous to go on carefully, with unshod feet, in inquiring into Scripture. The increase of light and knowledge among us may be turned of Satan to much mischief, if we do not, in the holy power of the Spirit, use it skillfully, and bear it about with us humbly. All knowledge should be gathered in the sanctuary, in communion, or else it will not be acquired in the divine way. The manna which fed the camp was conveyed to the camp in a vessel of God's providing—the dew bore the manna from heaven to earth. (Ex. 16) The vessel, as well as the contents, were both of divine appointment. And so with us: our food is to come to us according to the divine order; knowledge is to be gathered out of the proper vessel, and, I judge, that is communion with the Lord. If my intellect merely take up knowledge it is not the dew bringing the manna, but the food of the camp has contracted some soil from the earth. I desire much to remember this lesson; and oh! to know a little of the power of what we have already, rather than to attain more!

The blessed forgetfulness of self is of great esteem in the sight of our Lord and Master.

Thoughts on Genesis 12, 13

IN these two chapters we have three important features of truth among many others. First, there is the Lord's own aspect of grace towards Abram. Then there is Abram's failure in the trial of the famine. And, lastly, there is Abram's manifesting grace in the trial with Lot.

The purpose of the Lord towards His own is to conform them to His image. The foundation of the Lord's ways towards His elect is grace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 1 viewed in connection with the condition of the earth under the Lord's eye, as seen in Babel, in the former chapter, presents the grace of the Lord in addressing Abram. The promise thus made in the seed—Christ — nothing can disannul.

When Abram failed, it was like Jonah, a smooth passage soon turned to rough waters. Pharaoh commanded his servants, and they sent Abram out and all that he had.

When Abram exhibited grace, then the Lord said to Abram look now towards the north, south, east, west, —all is blessing for you. You have not lost by making a sacrifice in grace. You can more clearly see your blessings in grace.

Grace led to act in grace, and the fruit of grace is answered in more grace to Him who gave the promise.

When Abram left his native land, and went out in faith and hope, then he worshipped the Lord. When he failed in Egypt, no altar was raised there. He was sent out, and when he came to the place where he worshipped the Lord before, there he worshipped again. His failure was thus confessed.

Though the Canaanite was in the land, this did not hinder his worship; for his mind was stayed on the Lord: but when he went down into Egypt, in the trial of the famine, his worship was hindered; for he trusted in his own arrangements.

It is a humbling thought, that it was when their substance was great, they, the two brothers, could not dwell together; but the one who acted in most grace had the richest blessing unfolded to him.

The Coming of Our Lord

THE aspect which the coming of our Lord wears to our souls, changes precisely as we are nearer or more distant in heart from Him (and so, indeed, does every part of the word of God). If close to Him in love, it is to us “that blessed hope” — “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” If far, from Him, it is either wholly unseen, unthought of, or if forced on our attention makes us uneasy — sets conscience at work: and so correspondingly of every intermediate state of heart.

We must not be content with seeing the Lord’s second coming as a doctrine merely, nor with being able clearly to enter into a scriptural detail of prophetic instruction: the Lord’s return is presented to us, in the word of God, for the furtherance of affectionate, joyful anticipation. We must also be watchful, lest our hope in His glorious appearing degenerate into mere knowledge. It is the exercise of this hope in the soul that is connected with practical holiness — “every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself,” &c. (1 John 3:3.) “Knowledge puffeth up.” Those who are really believing that “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh,” must form a low estimate of earthly things; just as the possessions of Israel diminished in value in proportion as the year of jubilee was at hand. We do well to remember that the wise virgins let slip the hope of the Bridegroom’s coming, even after they had sincerely gone forth to meet Him ■ “they all slumbered and slept.” The Lord Jesus is our portion ■ our inheritance; therefore, He is our hope ■ “we look for the Saviour.” He gave Himself for our sins, and He Himself will come again to receive us, in the plentitude of His unchanged grace (John 14:3). He will send angels to deal with the ungodly, but He will come Himself for His blood-bought church. His saints, both living and asleep, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thee. 4:16, 17). Many will deny this, but we know the heart of Jesus, and believe His word.

Let scoffers rail with harden’d brow,
Or cries of “peace” resistless flow,
Or reason mock His word,
By grace divine ‘twill be my choice
To watch for the Archangel’s voice ■
To wait for Christ my Lord.

Heb. 11:13-10

WHAT is declared of the fathers in the Book of Genesis in these verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is beautifully exhibited (and therefore, fully verified) by their histories. I feel desirous to consider this a little carefully; the Lord leading the heart (as through circumstances, I trust, He graciously has done lately,) a little more vividly beyond the grave.

1. "These all died in faith."

The history strikingly illustrates this. They valued their dead bodies, and the burying-places which held them. While they lived, they were content to sojourn in Canaan without having so much as to set their foot on. But, "they died in faith." The promise of God had made over that land, that very land, to them, though they themselves were to be gathered to their fathers (Gen. 15); and this was the warrant for their dying in faith, in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection unto the enjoyment of it. They would link their dead, though not their living, bodies with that land. Their care in securing the field of Ephron, the cave of Machpelah, for a burying-place, tells us this. And so, the jealousy with which those of them who died in Egypt secured the carriage of their bones over to the promised land. All this verifies that they died in faith.

2. They saw the promises "afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them."

As they died in faith of the promises, so did they live in the full persuasion of them, though still distant. Their history, in like manner, gives beautiful witness of this.

Abraham lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob. That was so. But then, they were heirs together of the promise. Of this they were, in the midst of their pilgrim-days, fully persuaded. And therefore, on fitting occasions, they can act upon that full persuasion in a way which nothing but such persuasion can account for, assuming the dignities and place which the promise warranted. Their "name was to be great," and "the land was to be theirs." And they would, if the moment called them, act in such character without thinking it robbery. See some instances of this.

Abimelech, the king of Gerar, courts the friendship of Abraham. Abraham at once allows the veil to drop, and puts off the pilgrim-girdle that hid or bound up his royal apparel, and takes headship of the Philistine king. (Gen. 21)

Isaac, in his day, does the same. Another Abimelech, king of Gerar, with the high estates of his kingdom, waits on Isaac; and Isaac accepts his person, grants his requests, prepares a feast, and then (instead of being sent away by Abimelech as before, in the day of humiliation,) sends Abimelech away as in the day of power and majesty. His state is kingly. The great man of the earth, and the heavenly pilgrim, for a mystic hour, have exchanged places — or, if not quite that, the pilgrim has become above a king. (Gen. 26)

And so, Jacob, he blesses Pharaoh; taking to him, without reserve, the place of "the better." For, "without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better." The confessed pilgrim assumes, for a moment, a dignity beyond that of the chief man of the earth in that day, the Pharaoh of Egypt.

(Gen. 47)

Delightful scriptures, indeed, these are. Without reserve or apology, the heavenly strangers assume the station which will be theirs, under promise of God, in its season. And such an act tells us, that though as yet they had not “received the promises,” yet they “were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” They could, in the faith and spirit of their Lord, ascend the mount of transfiguration on a due occasion.

3. They “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

This was literally so in the progress of their journeys along the stream of time. By word of mouth they declared this of themselves. (Gen. 23:4; 28:4; 47:9.) Their actions, also, were according to this. The moral principles on which they carried themselves spoke the same language. They lived in tents — signifying plainly that they were not taking up any certain settlement in the earth. They surrendered their rights in the world. Abraham, for instance, gave up the choice of the land to his younger brother, leaving it with him to appoint him whatever portion he pleased. (Gen. 13.)

And Isaac does the same: the instance is very striking. The Lord so signally blesses him; there was so much of the divine presence manifestly with him, that his company becomes oppressive to the world, and the men of Gerar require him to withdraw from them. But the blessing follows him: his servants dig a well, and the Lord fills it; and then, the uncircumcised seek his wells, and he yields again.

This was a pilgrim’s practical life. He would put up with either insult or injury, with an affront to his name, or damage to his estate. This was moral power, the principle of a pilgrim’s life. This was conduct becoming his confession, that he was a stranger on the earth. “Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth.” It is natural they should. But neither Abraham nor Isaac are potsherds of the earth, but heavenly strangers. Thus was their confession verified by their ways. They acted; and, in their behavior., bore witness that they were pilgrims here.

4. “If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to return.”

The history very largely warrants this thought concerning the pilgrim-fathers; a thought which tells us that stranger ship on earth did not arise from regrets, but from hopes. They were dissatisfied with the present thing, not because of that which was past, but of that which was to come. The scene around was a wilderness, by reason of the power over them of the scene before, and not of that behind them. They might easily have retraced the road to Padan-Aram. Eliezer did so. They had not forgotten the way, for he did not mistake a step, nor had he to inquire it. And as easy would it have been for Abraham, or for Isaac, to have taken that journey as for Eliezer. But Eliezer went there only to do a certain business, and to return. In a moral sense, his visit to the land from whence his master, Abraham, had come out, was no return to it. He did not linger there beyond the term of his appointed service. “Send me away unto my master,” was his word then, and no entreaties or kindnesses could change it. (Gen. 24)

And Rebecca’s mind was the same: “I will go,” was her immediate decision, when the matter was referred to her. All this being according to the purposes and thoughts of the great patriarch himself. For, on sending Eliezer away, he had taken an oath of him that he would, on no pretense

whatever, take his son back to that land of his kindred. Let consequences be what they may, that was never to be done.

Jacob, too (however to appearance it may be otherwise), acts equally in the same spirit, and on the same principles. His wrong way brings him under divine chastening, and he has to seek the distant land of his forefathers. But he is there as an exile, rather than as at home. He is there actually because of God's discipline, but not there morally, because of the desire of his own heart. He remains there, it is true, a far longer time than Eliezer did; as many years, perhaps, as the other had hours. But still all the time, he is there in the spirit of Eliezer. For, like him, as soon as the business was done, as soon as the purpose or hand of the Lord gives him his dismissal, he leaves it; leaves it, too, I may add, though Laban's contract and God's blessing were making it profitable for him to remain; and, though Esau's enmity, he might well judge, awaited him if he dared to return. But so it was. With loss behind, and danger before him, he leaves it. Indeed, such had been his purpose throughout, from beginning to end. As he was setting out, he talks with all desire of his return. As soon as Joseph is born his hopes are all alive that the time of his banishment is over. And he remains after that, only under God's sanction, and departs as soon as God's word allows him. (Gen 28:21; 30:23; 31:3-13.) All this surely tells us that morally, or in the spirit of his mind, he had no more returned to that land than Abraham or Isaac.

This mind, not to go back to the place from which they had been called, was therefore, the mind which strongly impregnated the whole pilgrim-family. It was so much the air they breathed, that even the Syrian servant inhaled it, and lived by it, and the elect bride felt the virtue of it at once. The language of their walk, concerning their native land, was what ours should be, concerning "this present evil world:"

"Twere easy, did we choose,

Again to reach the shore;

But this is what our souls refuse■

We'll never touch it more."

We may be low, without being lowly.

“I’m Going Home.”

Thoughts suggested to the writer by the exclamation of a dying saint, “I’m going home.”

“I’m going borne!” I’m wing’d for flight

To yonder peaceful clime;

Prepai’d to go, I only wait

My God’s appointed time.

“I’m going home!” to join the song

Of Moses and the Lamb;

To stand and bow, and cast my crown

Before the great “I AM.”

“I’m going home!” no longer earth

Hast thou a charm for me!

One spot■a narrow house■a grave

Is all I ask of thee,

“I’m going home!” but willing leave

My dust in thy embrace;

To wake again, cleans’d, purified,

Renew’d by sovereign grace.

“I’m going home!” to dwell with Him

Who bled and died for me;

For He hath said that where He is,

There shall His servant be.

“I’m going home!” transporting thought!

Lord Jesus, quickly come!

And bear my raptur’d soul away

To her celestial home.

The Word of God

THE child of God needs no human testimony to convince him that the Scriptures are the Word of God. They so fit into his daily experience, and take up the thoughts and feelings of his mind, that he is conscious that the Author must be the living God. For He only could thus speak of the secrets of his heart, and the inmost recesses of his soul. He finds his joy and peace flow only in the channel where they are said to flow. His sorrows come as the appointed way is darted from. Man, the world, and the things that are seen, are found to be exactly that which the Word describes them to be. So perfectly true is the statement, that their emptiness and uncertainty are every day painfully experienced.

Further, the simple way in which Scripture history, prophecy, and promise are given, shows the fidelity of the Writer; while all the parts, from the beginning to the end, are so interwoven as to present one perfect and harmonious whole. Which fact demonstrates, beyond a question, that although many channels of communication were employed, and at various times, and under widely different circumstances, yet, that one mastermind suggested and arranged the whole. This being so, it is evident that the Author can be none other than the only wise God Himself. How true then are these inspired words, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from Me beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:9, 10).

Precious book! God's inspiration! Oh! that thou wert my only lamp, my constant light. Oh! that my feet were ever directed to keep thy precepts, and my heart to trust thy promises.

The word of God is something to be received and listened to as well as studied. We may ask for, and with meekness receive teaching by the Holy Ghost, as well as apply our minds in searching the Scriptures. The word is for the conscience not less than the understanding. Many forget this to a degree, and thus come to regard the word almost exclusively as a thing about which their mind must work, and thus, in result, come to force their own meaning upon it, instead of waiting upon the Lord to open their understandings by His Spirit. When we come to the Scriptures of God it should be in this spirit, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," as sheep who hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him; they know His voice, they know when He speaks. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." We want our ears wakened morning by morning. True, the word is for study; but oh! what grace is needed to keep the mind in meekness of waiting and reception, lest we go beyond, or fall short of the Lord's word, lest we force, or distort, or trample upon it. Surely all the divisions and strife among Christians—those schisms in the body—which are our disgrace, and doubtless are our shame, are more or less traceable to a state of insubjection to the WORD—a disposition of impatience, or self-sufficiency—a want of meekness to receive the Lord's teaching. We do not properly remember that it is God's word, and not man's. If we remembered this as we ought, we should come to the word like one who said, "My soul standeth in awe of Thy word;" and so solemn should we feel it to be that we should be afraid of

disputing with one another about its meaning: it would be our grief and shame to hear Christians arguing for and against this view, and more deeply so at witnessing their unholy joy when one triumphs over another. God's word tries us in more ways than one, and though it is all plain to him that understandeth, it tries the posture of our souls much in waiting, and listening, and receiving. May the Lord keep our hearts, and those of the most advanced, in meek waiting upon Him for instruction; for the meek He will guide in judgment, the meek He will teach His way.

CHRIST THE ESSENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES. ■How I wish for myself, and desire to fix it on the consciences of others, that the one thing needful is the knowledge of CHRIST (John 17:2). Many seem to think that when they believe in Jesus, and are resting in His atoning death, they know all; but joy and peace are to be multiplied through a growing acquaintance with CHRIST (1 Peter 1:2). Every leaf of the Bible testifies of CHRIST: it is like a rose that is just opening under the genial warmth of the sun; each separate leaf emits the fragrance of the rose: the rose is not perfect without each leaf, and each leaf has fragrance only as being a part of the whole rose; so with the Bible, it is the testimony of JESUS in, every leaf. HE is the very essence of the written word; it has no value, no savor, apart from HIM; and when our hearts are really alive to discover CHRIST, to learn CHRIST, then, through the Spirit's teaching, each chapter will be fragrant with the perfume of His Name.

"Wouldest thou know that the matters contained in the word of Christ are real things? Then never read them for mere knowledge sake. Look for some beams of Christ's glory in every verse. Account nothing knowledge, but as it is seasoned with some relation of the glorious presence of Christ by His quickening Spirit. Use no conference about spiritual truths for conference sake, but still mind the promoting of edification. Use not duties for custom and mere service sake, but for nearer communion with God." ■Dorsey.

CONFESSION. ■Confession, to be effectual, must be sincere and from the heart. How few of us there are who like to confess our own peculiar failings; and of those that do, there are still fewer who act as though they believed what they confess. But real confession, when the Spirit of God makes our sin a burden to us, is not only a duty, but a relief also. By making a conscience, and a daily business of confession, under the prayerful meditation of the Word of God, we may save ourselves much sorrowful experience. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9.) "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5).

Genesis 9:8-29

THIS passage presents some serious instruction. Noah received his name through the spirit of prophecy (Gen. 5:29). He found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was a just man, and perfect in his generations. He walked with God (Gen. 6:8, 9). God's testimony concerning him was, "Thee have I seen righteous bore Me." "He was a preacher of righteousness;" and by faith, "warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7). Coming out of the ark his sacrifice is accepted. God blesses him and establishes the covenant, of which the rainbow was a token, between Him and every living creature that came out of the ark. Notwithstanding all this present grace, Noah falls into open sin. Let hits that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. But by means of all this does God take occasion to open a great mystery. The sin of Noah is the means of discovering what sort of a heart was in his son Ham. The godliness of the father, training up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, would check and restrain, though it could not change the evil nature of Ham, but at length it breaks out. In Ham and Japheth we see produced the peaceable fruits of righteousness; they anticipate in their doings the first commandment with promise, Honor thy father, &c. Ham's deed is not without its significance. It marks a heart filled with bitterest hatred and scorn, destitute altogether of that charity which rejoiceth not in iniquity. It is the manifestation of the spirit which in after times we are warned against, namely, "speaking evil of dignities." The patriareh Noah was a Priest and King in his family, and should have been, even in his fall, had in reverence by a son. But how wonderful, rich, and free is the grace of God in restoring. How merciful His dealings with His saints. Noah is raised up and made the mouth of God in judgment; a divine revelation is given to him, and by the spirit of prophecy he declares things to come. How wonderful the way of God in separating the precious from the vile. The whole history is a figure of what is before our eyes. "Every plant; that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

The mystery is, there was a Ham in the ark—an Ishmael under covenant circumcised, and yet put out of the household of faith. An Esau about whom Rebecca inquired of the Lord, and who, for one morsel of meat sold his birthright, and forfeited the blessing. A Judas amongst the twelve. "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." The mystery of iniquity in the Church, and even now, writes John, are there many antichrist& "Little children, keep your, selves from idols."

PRECEPT. ■The precepts which God has given us are generally grounded upon some revelation of God's character; ■thus, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "Let us love one another, for love is of God;" "Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful;" "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," &c. &c.

John 16:1, 2, 3

IN these words of our Lord the connection is seen between ignorance of the Father and the Son, and the spirit that rejects disciples of Jesus.

In the Epistle of John the contrast to this evil spirit is seen in the connection between the fellowship there is with the Father and His Son, and the love there exists to those who are the Lord's.

In the Lord's teaching when on earth, as generally through the Word, the instruction given by contrast is constantly seen. Thus, in the sermon on the Mount, "It is written in the law, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye resist not evil." The difference between the law and the dispensation of grace in which we stand, is set forth in the contrast between Mount Sinai, and the appearing of Jesus Christ when He came ■ "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." To Mount Sinai none could approach ■ there was "lightning and tempest." To Christ Jesus, who came as a babe in Bethlehem, whoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out.

It is written concerning the Lord Jesus in the first chapter of John ■ "The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not:" again, "in Him was Life, the Life was the Light of men:" and again, "the darkness comprehended Him not."

Part of this darkness to which Christ the True Light was opposed is described in Matthew 23 ■ it was not that which was dark in the eyes of men, it was beautiful outside. Neither was it professed ignorance; but in connection with this which was dark before God, there was the profession of knowledge ■ "Now ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth."

It is further witnessed of Christ in John 1 as in contrast with the law, that "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the grand characteristic of this dispensation. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

The constant enmity of Satan, and the expression of darkness around, was in the opposing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The law had made no provision ■ it proved, it exposed, it condemned the sinner. Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, He provides, He atones, He pardons.

When He was accused of eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, His answer was, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

When in the Pharisee's house, the liberty of the poor woman who washed the Lord's feet with her tears was rebuked, ■ "This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner." In reply, He sets forth the mission of His grace and forgiveness, as the ground of His acceptance of this poor woman in all her love, ■ "A certain man had two creditors, one owed him five hundred pence and the other fifty, and when

they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both.” This left no room for boasting, but where there was the deep sense of pardoning love, there was the bright expression of love to Jesus; but the Pharisee found fault.

Thus it was constantly as light from God—a heavenly light shining in a dark place, that Jesus walked in this world—the fullness of grace and truth. There was in those who could not bow to this expression of grace the final casting out of the Son of God. On this ground, (the hatred manifested in the world to Him who came forth from the Father,) the Lord Jesus forewarns His disciples, that as the Father sent Him into the world, even so He also sent them in the world; and that, as they would be His witnesses, they would, as He did, meet rejection from the world in its ignorance of the Father and of Him. “If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

Now is the question of offenses raised. The word is, “These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended.”

When the Lord had forewarned His disciples, as recorded in John 13 and Matthew 26, Peter had said, “Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.”

It was for no offense of the poor blind man which was healed, that he was cast out by the Pharisees—he did not offend. Though they hid cast out one of the Lord’s little ones, the Lord opened His arms to receive him. Woe unto the world because of offenses! Woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh: better for that man that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea, than that he should offend one of the Lord’s little ones.

But there is danger to the disciples in a day of offenses, lest they join in that which offends—it is not being cast out that offends as far as the Lord’s little ones is concerned, but it is standing with that which rejects the testimony of the grace of Christ.

When Peter warmed himself with those who rejected his gracious Master—when he chose ease there, rather than be rejected with his gracious Lord, then he failed.

May the Lord save His people from taking a place which would lead them to reject disciples of Jesus.

May fellowship with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, be more and more manifested in the fruits of His Spirit, bringing out love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, and charity.

Happiness Sought and Found

HAST thou happiness sought? hast thou happiness found?

The pleasures and peace which in Jesus abound.

(This earth can produce its own fleeting joys,

And the children of earth are content with such toys.)

I sought it long, but I sought it in vain,

At home and abroad, but I often found pain;

Like a shadow it fled, when I thought I was blest, Till pointed I was to God's own loving breast.

He told me I'd sin'd against Him in His laws,

That Satan and sin would ne'er plead my cause■

That Jesus He'd given—the Son of His love■

To purchase my seat in the mansions above.

My heart is made captive — what else can I do,

Than praise Him, and love Him, and set out anew;

To live to this Friend I neglected before,

I'm happy, indeed I admire! I adore!

1 Chron

In the progress of 1 Chronicles, we observe that David commits four errors. But this we observe also; that each of them comes from a distinct source, and receives distinct discipline from the hand of the Lord. There is profit for the soul in marking this and musing upon it.

1. (See ch. 13) David commits a great mistake here. It is on the occasion of bearing the Ark from Kirjath-jearim to the tent which he had prepared for it on mount Zion. He put the Ark upon a new cart, instead of committing it to the shoulders of the Levites.

Whence came this error? How was it that this mistake was incurred? David acted hastily, in the mere desire (right as it was) of his own heart, without consulting the word of God; under the sanction of which even the right desires of the heart ought to proceed and be gratified. David did not either consult or remember God's word in the Book of Numbers, as he ought to have done, on this solemn occasion.

The Lord allows the error to bring mischief and trouble upon him. The mistake he commits works in the end its own cure; and without any severe rebuke from the Lord, David is brought to an understanding of his error; and though suffering for a little moment, all ends in blessing and joy.

2. (See ch. 17) David's mind is under an error here. He talks to Nathan of building an house of cedar for the Ark of God. This, again, was a right desire; a beautiful witness that David's heart was fervently towards the Lord. But still the purpose of that heart could not be allowed.

Whence then, I again ask, came this error? Not like the former case, from a forgetfulness of God's word, because the word did not treat on such a matter. It came simply from want of full spirituality of mind, or of sympathy with the mind of God. This was the source of the error, and the Lord deals with it in the gentlest way possible. He does not let this error, like the first, work any sorrow for him. He sends him at once a message by His prophet, and David's thought is corrected. This is like the gracious admonition of the Spirit of God, without any dealings of His hand, in the discipline of His saints.

3. (See chapter 20; also 2 Samuel 11. 12.) We have here the record of a terrible breach. Nothing can well exceed either the sin, or the mischief that followed it.

Whence arose the trespass? Not like the first, from a forgetfulness of the word of God; not like the second, from a want of full spirituality of mind; it came from the lusts which war in the members, from the corrupt springs which rise in our nature. This is the history of this sin. The history of the sorrow and chastening that followed it is of the same character. God pronounces His entire abhorrence of all this, by telling David, that henceforth the sword should never depart from his house. Beyond, far beyond, what we before saw of the divine judgments, is all this visitation upon this character of evil an awful expression of the mind of God on iniquity which broke loose from such a corrupt spring.

4. (See ch. 21) This is the last offense—the King’s numbering of the people. We are told its source—it came from the temptation of Satan.

It reminds us of Adam. It is a reflection of the scene in the Garden of Eden. It was the old Serpent working in man again the desire to be as God. David was seduced in pride, to act as though he were the owner and lord of Israel, and not merely their king or shepherd. He would have the people numbered as Jehovah (whose right it was, and whose inheritance they were) had once numbered them (Num. 1:4). He would be as God.

Such was the sin here, and such the spring of it. The Lord deals with it in judgment, but causes mercy at the end to rejoice against judgment. Oman’s threshing-floor, like the promise in Eden about the woman’s seed, preaches the gospel to this ruined sinner. Satan is overthrown again, grace is triumphant again, and the sinner is saved while humbled.

Thus various springs of evil are disclosed—forgetfulness of God’s word—lack of spiritual-mindedness —inbred corruption—temptation of Satan. And with each case we see a different method in the divine discipline. All error is not treated alike. How perfect are His ways, whether He speaks in the whirlwind, or the still small voice! We also are to distinguish things that differ. In this we are to be “imitators of God as dear children.” Jesus in His day, treated the multitude and their rulers differently; Paul distinguished between the seducers and their captives; and some we are to save with fear, others with compassion, taking heed to ourselves that we hate “even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

Chapter 1

Verses 1-4. The scene of this beautiful book opens in heaven. The riches of the glorious kingdom, and the honor of the excellent majesty of this mighty king, Ahasuerus form the basis of a parable whereby the Divine Revealer of the mysteries of God would lead our hearts to the contemplation of Him who is “God of gods, and Lord of lords—a great God, a mighty, and a terrible.” Beneath the historical narration of this exquisite episode in Jewish history, the Holy Ghost has laid the revelation of that salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace unto us.

God ever rejoices. Out of the boundless resources which are treasured within Himself; He spreads His royal table for the feast.

The nobles and princes before the king probably represent the “sons of God” of Job 38:7; the chief princes” of Daniel 10:13: the servants, those of whom “thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him;” and of whom Paul asks, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Verses 5-8. But not only for his princes and servants does this royal giver provide. The king made a seven days’ feast unto all the people, great and small, that were found in Shushan the palace. And so truly does the glorious God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, prepare a royal feast for all who are found in Shushan the palace, the tabernacle of the Lord, the sanctuary of His presence.

Not in vain does the Spirit record a circumstance so apparently minute as that the vessels of gold, in which they gave drink, were diverse one from another. Very deep spiritual things are often conveyed through the medium of earthly things that seem of little moment. Men commonly have their services in sets, the pieces being uniform; an odd piece, or many such, would be a blemish in their eyes. Not so Ahasuerus; not so our God. “At sundry times and in divers manners He spake to the fathers by the prophets;” and now, in vessels, diverse one from another, He ministers to us His joy. Health and sickness—prosperity and adversity—abundance and need—a gifted teacher, a patient sick one whom Jesus loves—these and many more are the golden vessels diverse one from another, whence those who are bidden to His ‘feast partake of the royal wine. True, indeed, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels;” if God uses any of us to convey blessing to others it is as an earthen vessel, but to the receiver He makes it a golden one. So to speak, the wine of the kingdom changes the earthen vessel to gold. How we value that whereby God supplies our need—be it the water of life or the wine of the kingdom!

Ahasuerus will not, as men do now, set before the people a commoner feast than his princes and servants partake of. The wine of the kingdom in abundance is there, according to the state of the king (see 2 Sam. 7:21). Man’s gifts are according to the state of the receiver, God’s are according to the state of the Giver. Man gives great things to great people, and small things to small people; God gives the wine of the kingdom to all the people, great and small—if only they are found waiting

upon Him. And what is this royal wine? Is it not God's own joy? for wine in the Word is a type of joy—in its higher sense of heavenly, in its lower sense of earthly joy.

But though there is abundance of the best, it may not be forced upon unwilling hearts, nor beyond the capacity to receive. "None did compel." His word is, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;" but it must be according to every man's pleasure. God does not say, I will open thy mouth and fill it, but, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." May God the Holy Ghost so minister to us the things of Jesus that we may earnestly desire the royal wine of His providing here; and, not desiring the dainty meats of him that hath an evil eye (Prov. 23:6), may we rejoicingly anticipate that day when He shall drink of the fruit of the vine new with us in His Father's kingdom!

Verse 9. This introduces the monarch's queen. She is the honored weaker vessel—honored in being the distributor of that which she receives of him. It was in strictest keeping with what was decorous and comely that she should make a feast for the women in the royal house. But she forgot, as the sequel will show, that "the woman is the glory of the man;" and that her blessing lay in giving glory to him. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Even the house where Vashti made her feast belonged to King Ahasuerus. Not a vessel, not a viand, not a drop of wine, that did not belong to him. "What have ye that ye have not received?"

The position of Vashti was a type of that of Israel. As she, in the royal house, which belonged to the king, was the dispenser of the feast, so Israel, in the earth, which is the Lord's, was His appointed channel of blessing to the nations. (Gen. 12:8, &c.)

Verses 10-12. A comparison of verse 10 with Revelation 1:4, 3:1, and 4:5, leads to the thought that the Holy Spirit is represented by the seven chamberlains; and this is supported by the circumstance that the offices of the three chamberlains, Hegai, Shaashgaz, and Hatach, indicate various functions of the same Holy Spirit. This will appear as we proceed.

What grace and kindness are found in Ahasuerus. As the acme of his joy, when his heart was merry with wine, he would place the royal crown upon the head of Vashti, and show the princes and people her beauty. But she has no idea of this grace: the king has been but little in her thoughts, and she cannot enter into the riches of his love, nor comprehend the honor he designs to put upon her. She refused to come.

In this conduct we again see Vashti to be a type of Israel, whom the Holy Ghost describes as a people walking after their own thoughts.

Compare Jeremiah 13:11. "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear." See also Jer. 7:25, 26; Deuteronomy 22:18, 19.

Compare the last clause of verse 12 with Deut. 32:21, 22.

Perhaps this is the proper place to remark, that it is not as the wife, but as the chosen queen, that Vashti is represented. The same is true of Esther. In the Song of songs we have the bride, and we

only need contrast that book with this to be assured that the Book of Esther does not reveal the bride. Indeed, not once is either Vashti or Esther called by any of the endearing names with which the Canticles abound. Hence it is always Vashti the queen, Esther the queen.

We lay stress on this, for on it largely depends the right understanding of the book. It is the chosen queen of the great king, and not the spouse of the bridegroom. In other words, the chosen people of God, not the bride of Christ.

Vashti knew not the day of her visitation; Israel knew not theirs. This was the crisis in the history of both. Had Vashti known it there had been no Esther the queen; had Israel known it there had been no Church in a position of higher blessing than ever Israel knew.

Verses 13-15. The seven chamberlains in verse 10. appear, as I have said, to represent the Spirit of God: so here the seven princes, of whom the king takes counsel, seem a type of the Son. In Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is called the Counselor. Compare "What shall we do?" in verse 15, with "Let us," in Genesis 1:26.

The 15th verse is remarkable as typifying the distinctive character of the Jewish economy it is not grace but law. Vashti has not performed the commandment of the king, and she must be treated according to law. There is a most marked contrast between the standing of Vashti and that of Esther. We shall see by-and-by that in the latter it is all of grace.

Verses 16-20. Memucan counsels the putting away of Vashti, and the giving of her royal estate unto another. Mark the construction of verse 19: "Let there go a royal commandment, that Vashti come no more before King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal estate unto her companion." Law and grace.

It was impossible that Vashti could have been retained as queen, for it would have subverted the order of the whole empire; it would have been the violation by the king of the commonest principles of justice. And so, to have retained Israel as the peculiar people of God, after their rejection of the one condition upon which their glory depended; viz., the acknowledgment of His Son, was impossible. The world could not have gone on, for to retain in a position of privilege and trust one who has grossly abused that trust, is manifestly opposed to every principle of right. There may indeed be restoration, but that can only be on confession and repentance.

Verses 21, 22. Thus order is preserved, for God's principle is that we give "honor to whom honor" is due.

Divine Delight in Grace

“In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. —John 4:31, 32

MANY witnesses we have to the delight which God takes in the exercise of grace, in the work of Christ for sinners, in the provision He Himself has made for the bringing home of His banished ones. The whole of Luke 15 declares this; and this delight of God in the saving of poor sinners gets another fine reflection in the experience of Christ in John 4:31, 32.

A sinner had just been converted, and her spirit filled with liberty and joy.

The disciples, who had left their Master to buy some food, rejoin Him just at the moment, and spread the table for Him. But He tells them that He needs it not. He has been already at a feast; though wearied, hungry, and athirst, He has been rested and refreshed.

But how? Since they had left Him He had been toiling diligently, and had only seen water without tasting it. All this might well have made Him more weary and more athirst. But still He was refreshed, and needed not the table which they had spread for Him. A sinner had been saved and made happy: this had given Him a feast in a desert. The very style in which He answers the disciples, its fervor and energy, bespeak the joy of that moment to Him, and what His soul had known.

What an expression of the divine delight in the grace that saves a sinner is this! The sinner had known her joy—but it was not to be compared with the joy the Saviour had known. To speak in Levitical language, the fat was still the food of the altar. In her new-found joy the woman forgets her waterpot; in His, Jesus forgets His thirst. Sacred, happy witness of a precious secret of the divine bosom.

And joy, let me add, begets generosity and largeness of heart. When we are happy we are open-handed. Joy is the parent of great and noble sentiments of soul. And thus is it also with Christ here; not that, but at all times, as I need not say, every sentiment of His soul was infinitely perfect. But these verses give us an expression of what I observed, that joy begets generosity. The mind of Christ, having conceived this joy which we have noticed, is borne onward in a strain of beautiful generosity, “One soweth and another reapeth,” He says to the wondering disciples. It was the mind of David after the capture of Ziklag. David was then so full of joy that he decreed, “As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his be that tarrieth by the stuff.” The joy of the spoil of the Amalekites so enlarged the heart of David, that there came forth this great ordinance, and he made it a statute in Israel (1 Sam. 30). And so, to speak as a man, the mind of the Son of God in this passage.

What, I ask, does all this tell us poor sinners, but the deep interest which our salvation has in the bosom of God? The Son came forth from that bosom to reveal it to us; and, in the words of a hymn, we say,

“Tis His great delight to bless us.

That song we may sing, tuning our instruments for such music, at this fine and fervent scripture.

All Things Possible With God

“For with God nothing shall be impossible!” ■ Luke 1:37.

“Is anything too hard for the Lord? Gen. 18:14.

WHILST the full soul loatheth an honey-comb, to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. These truths are, perhaps, more proved in regard to simple scriptural statements than in any other way. The humble, meek, and growing Christian picks up the crumbs, and delights to handle and turn over the simple passages and promises of God’s word, pleading them in prayer, meditating on them in secret, and endeavoring to fortify himself by them in practice.

Not so the more lofty or self-satisfied Christian: (and alas! may we not all more or less plead guilty of this sin?) he passes by the simpler passages; he would fain dive deep, or soar high, and be restless if obliged to tarry at an elementary truth. But thanks be to God, as we grow in experience, so we grow in setting a high value upon the simplest and most elementary portions of God’s holy word. And may we not consider it a subject of praise and thankfulness, that God’s pure word is daily becoming more and more the household bread of our souls? Much as we value the love and gifts of others, truly do we find that they serve us really only as they are used by God, and as we use them to Him. Happy advance, when our souls find all our good in Him, though this be learned through the breaking of earthly cisterns.

Jesus, to whom I fly,

Does all my wishes till:

What though the creature streams are dry,

I have a fountain still.

When walking in the narrow path, and realizing the daily difficulties of the Christian life, the grand truth that God is a God of impossibilities, will afford a deep solace and consolation to the tempted and harassed soul. Whilst he contemplates this glorious character of God, he will be led, in calmness and composure, to lay all difficulties at the footstool of divine grace: he will be led to look less at difficulties and more at God: he will be less often disappointed, and oftener made glad: he will be led to consider matters, and as this or that will be for God’s glory; easy though it be or difficult, he will plead with One whom he knows is fully able to maintain His own glory and honor, though, as to sight and reason, there may be many obstacles. The history of the children of Israel (Ps. 105, 107, 78. &c.) fully verifies this character of God. Have we any difficulties, personal, family, or others of a graver nature? Yea, have we not many? Let it be our business then to prove our God, and to know Him as the God of wonders. Jeremiah pleads thus, “Ah, Lord God! behold Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee” (Jer. 32:17). Our blessed Lord said, “With God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). And this He himself pleads in His ‘hour of sorrow, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee” (Mark 14:36).

The amount of our faith in this business is of great importance; but these remarks are rather for those of weak faith, pointing out to such what a God we have to do with. It is often said in such and such a trial, 'Oh! it is past hope!' the smile on the lips betrays the unbelief of the heart, and many a child of trial succumbs under it with the impression that there is no remedy.

Moses says, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders" (Ex. 15:11). Isaiah testifies that "His name shall be called Wonderful," (Is. 9:8), and says, that "the Lord of Hosts is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (Isa. 28:29).

Even Job says that He does "great things, past finding out; yea, and wonders without number" (Job 9:10): and Daniel declares of Him that "He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth" (Dan. 6:27).

The Scriptures, however, abound in similar testimony, and the more we read them, the more shall we learn, amid other things, of the character of God.

Let the timid, and tempted, and cast down, in this cloudy and dark day, be encouraged to trust in God, and to remember that "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

Faith is a mighty principle; it grasps great things, because it is dealing with God. Oh, how near to God our souls are brought when we thus deal with Him, no matter how great the difficulties! It seems as though we had got up into one of the high mountains, from whence the men and things below look very small, and comparatively insignificant. "O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endureth forever. To Him who ALONE doeth GREAT WONDERS: for His mercy endureth forever" (Ps. 136: 3, 4).

Ecclesiastes

IT is a common and a correct thought, that the Book of Ecclesiastes is a witness, under the Holy Ghost, to the vanity of all things “under the sun.”

This is so, most surely. Solomon was lifted up, that he might be able, from his position and resources, to inspect and test the vanity of all human conditions. All that either business or pleasure could provide for him, all that wealth or station or learning commanded, was within his reach, and at his disposal. And he challenged it all to say what it was worth.

He went through all the conditions of human life which carried with them even a semblance of promise to contribute anything to him. His search was complete. His inspection and testing left nothing unproved; and each and all were equally vain and unsatisfying. No one thing relieved the disappointment which another had produced. His journey was a wearying and vexatious pursuit of what was ever and equally eluding him. From everything the sense of vanity pressed on his spirit, and there was nothing to relieve or deliver him of all that was done or that was found “under the sun.”

The principal business of this Book of Ecclesiastes is to tell us this; and a valuable as well as serious lesson it is. Well, if we learn it, and the better for us, the better we learn it.

We should not, however, fully honor the wisdom of God in this Book, if we said that this was its only business. It is not so. It teaches us principally, it is true, the general vanity of all the scene around us, but it likewise lets us know that there is one outlet, one relief from the oppressive sense of the common, universal emptiness, and that that is found in the service of God. This is its second lesson.

I may here call to mind how the Apostle teaches us that there is but one outlet from our condition of condemnation. He tells us that we are “shut up” to the faith of Jesus. Law and works, and all other provisions fail, and prove themselves vain; for all of us are concluded under sin, and there is no escape from such condition of death but faith in the Lord Jesus now revealed to us. (See Gal. 3)

This Book of Ecclesiastes reminds me of that; for in it I see one way, but one only, open to us as an escape from the condition and from the sense of an universal vanity. We are “shut up” to it.

In these thoughts we have this analogy. Faith in Jesus, says the Apostle, is the one only outlet from a state of condemnation. The living to Jesus, says the Book of Ecclesiastes, is the one only outlet from a state of vanity. And we may well rejoice in the simplicity of such relief from such heavy and grievous conditions. “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days” (ch. 11:1).

Here there is found something solid, something abiding, something which does not partake of the common universal vanity. The service of Christ has the value of eternity in it. The bread cast on the waters is found after many days, or at a future hour.

And, I may add, that this lesson is again taught us. All the New Testament reads it to us; for there we learn that there are “bags which wax not old,” and that it is service to Christ which fills them for us—that there is such a thing as being “rich toward God,” and such a treasure as “faileth not,” no thief approaching it, no moth corrupting it. And there also we learn, according to the whole bearing of the Book of Ecclesiastes, that “the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

Happy, serious, simple lesson! The highest attainments or richest prosperity in things under the sun are all vanity, while the smallest service to the Lord, even the giving of a cup of cold water in His name, has the value of eternity in it.

No. 1

IT has been said that every blessing, save the gift of Jesus, has come in answer to prayer; God having, by the Spirit, breathed those desires into the hearts of His children, which He had previously intended to answer. The gift of Jesus, on the contrary, occupied the Divine mind without man's partaking of the wondrous plan, so as to make it a matter of prayer. It originated with Himself; the idea was exclusively His own. In the fullness of time He performed His wondrous intention.

Prayer, it will be admitted, occupies a most serious and important place in scripture; it stands next the atonement in value before God. Whilst it is true that He can only answer prayer through the virtue of the atonement made by our Great High Priest, yet, it is equally true, that a vast amount of present blessing is open to prayer, and depends upon it. The prayers of Saints are all treasured up in Heaven; not one is forgotten, for they are precious in the Divine mind.

The judgment and blessing of the last days seem to be connected with them. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? (Luke 18:7.) "And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the Saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast into the earth: and there were voices, and thundering's, and lightnings, and an earthquake (Rev. 8:4, 5). What a wondrous idea, that the prayers of Saints should thus stand connected with the future judgments! With fearful vengeance God will recompense the oppressors for all the offenses they have committed against His people! "Golden vials full of odor's, which are the prayers of Saints," have also their appointed place in the glorious scene presented in Revelation 5. The prayers of Saints, and the merits of the Lamb, seem to mingle together before the throne, and to cause the glories there proclaimed to shine forth.

God seems to wait on us, and He would have us to wait on Him. He says, I am willing to give you anything you ask: make all your requests known to Me; tell Me your every need, every sorrow, and every care. I am interested in them all, for I am your Father, and your Friend. Jesus has said, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Our Father desires to keep up this link of filial, prayerful confidence. He opens the door to us without restriction, and is glad to hear and answer the feeblest cry of His child. Would that we better understood the secret prayer that brings the open answer. How blessed are those intercessory moments spent in communion with God, in the happy consciousness that we are really dealing with God Himself, when the soul, full of all that concerns the heart and counsels of God, is engaged in bringing before Him those things which relate to His glory!

Intercession is the proper place for the Church now, day and night. Our spiritual power and blessing depend mainly upon it. The more spiritual the soul is, the more prayerful it will be, because it is then the most occupied in heart and desire about the things of God. What a field is opened, to us! How wide! Our prayers will be few and feeble, if our walk with God be of a low character. If we have only some two or three ideas about God and His purposes, our prayers will

be also narrow and confined. If we are unstable, unbelieving, and unspiritual, our prayers may return unanswered. Faith, a good conscience, a large heart, knowledge of the mind and will of God, and a sense of our utter weakness, are the proper prerequisites of prayer. Not many words are needed: the desires of the Spirit in our hearts, with groanings that cannot be uttered, God will attend to. He that searcheth the heart and knoweth the mind of the Spirit, will give heed to the feeblest cry. It is, surely, far more important to consider the condition of our souls, and the truthfulness of our requests, than the mode of utterance or form of speech. In prayer we have to do with the Divine ear, and not with man's. It is a direct speaking to God Himself if we gain His attention it is everything. Alas! our prayers are often gone through for form's sake, even in our closets and in public, to please the ear of man more than God. Hence we possess so little unction and fullness of the Spirit's cry, such as God delighteth in.

We very little know how much blessing daily comes to us in answer to prayer, or how much we lose by the want of it. If we depended less upon our own energies, and more upon God's helping and guiding hand, we should find ourselves more cast upon Him in prayer, and more inclined to wait for the answer. He can do everything; with Him all things are possible. Where man utterly fails, He is most pleased to come in, and thus show His wisdom, grace, and power. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. We are never straitened in Him. Let us then, beloved brethren, "pray without ceasing," and make all our requests known unto Him. Let us rely on the Lord, and wait patiently on our God. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Ps. 40:1).

Obedience

He that saith he abideth in Him might himself also so to walk, even as He walked■1 John 2:8.

CHRIST came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God; yea, Thy law is within my heart!” Christ ever walked in the perfect and blessed will of God. In the Scriptures, written for our instruction, we have all things revealed, all things that Christ heard and learned of the Father are declared. The holy will of God is presented therein to the faith of the children. To walk as Christ walked is to walk according to the Word. This is the imitating or following of Christ, who hath left us an example: this also is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. The obedience of Christ is not the seeking, even with much simplicity and godly sincerity, to attain to this, or to do that, but it is having the Word of God for a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Anything else and everything else, save the written Word, as opened to the heart and understanding of the saint by the Holy Ghost, is sure to lead astray from the path which alone brings glory to God.

Taking up My Cross

MY heart was full of happiness,
Each scene around was bright;
I lean'd on my beloved One,
His candle gave me light;
I thought such joys would still be mine,
Such bliss would never cease,
And gladly said to all around,
That wisdom's paths are peace.
But soon a cloud obscur'd my path,
A cross before me lay,
I knew it was for me to bear,
And yet I turn'd away;
The voice of my Beloved spake.
Yet stern it seem'd to be,
He pointed to the cross, and said,
"Take it and follow Me."
Father! O Father, ask not this,
'Tis more than I can bear;
Lay any other burden on,
But this in mercy spare:
Let me but move one step aside,
And so escape this loss; Father!
Thy feeble child will sink
Beneath this weary cross.
My prayer unheard unheeded sped,
Or was if heard denied,

He hedg'd my way so closely in,
I could not turn aside;
Yet, still I strove to break the fence,
Rebell'd against the rod,
And struggle'd sorely 'gainst Thy will■
My Saviour and my God.
But He who lov'd me at the first,
Still lov'd me to the end;
And, spite of all my waywardness,
Remain'd my faithful Friend:
He bore with all my loud complaints,
'Gainst my rebellion strove,
And show'd me that the dreaded cross,
Was sent in faithful love.
I stoop'd■I raked it up, and lo!
My heavy weight was gone,
My Saviour bore the load for me,
I was not left alone;
Then grateful, humbled to the dust,
Once more my path I trod,
Feeling how light the burden is,
Which we can cast on God.

TO PLEASE GOD. ■As we are never able to tell what circumstances will prove, or how persons may change toward us, it is well to trust in, and to be guided by, neither the one nor the other. The safe path, under every condition, is to walk with a single eye so as to please God. Thus we shall find ourselves at peace and rest, though all circumstances around us have changed, and though our dearest friends may have become our bitterest enemies.

1 Cor. 6:17

NOTHING so comforts, elevates, and humbles the soul as the grace of God. It is the spring of peace, holiness, and praise. Its depth—meeting us “when we were dead in sins” its length and breadth—removing “our transgressions from us,” as far as the east is from the west: and its height—raising us up and making us “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” proclaim the “perfect love” of God, which passeth knowledge. Blessed, indeed it is, in any measure, to appreciate Immanuel’s love; unspeakably sweet to taste that rich mercy which brought Christ down to die for the ungodly; very consoling to enter into the divine mind concerning the full and free forgiveness of all our sins; but, it is the spiritual understanding of that grace which has “joined” us unto the Lord, and made us one spirit with Him who is at the right hand of God, that fills our souls with settled peace, and strengthens and establishes our faith and hope in God.

How rich and plenteous the mercy of the Lord is! It is high even as the heaven is above the earth (Psalm 103:11). It is sovereign, “therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy” (Rom. 9:18). It is eternal, “for the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him,” &c. (Psalm 103:17). It is fixed “according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). It is secure, for “your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). It is safe, because “God abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). It is both present and effectual, for, it is written, “there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1), “now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3:2), “ye are complete in Him” (Col. 2:10); and such as receive this grace are objects of the Lord’s affection and delight, for “He taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy” (Psalm 147:11).

It is in this new and heavenly relationship and standing, into which the believer is brought, that the grace of God is so richly displayed; though the enjoyment of it is known only to faith: ■ “we have access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand” (Rom. 5:2). By nature we were all “children of wrath even as others:” we “were all dead,” on account of union with the first Adam; we were children of the wicked one, born in sin, and had a carnal mind which was enmity against God. But the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, took us out of that old standing, and brought us into a new one—■ He “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13); we have passed from death unto life (John 5:24). We are not now dead in sins, but alive unto God, “joined unto the Lord” by His quickening Spirit, and “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Eph. 5:30), so that He dwelleth in us, and we in Him (John 6:56). Thus God hath made Christ “unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

It is because of this union with Christ, that the believer is spoken of in the Scriptures as having died and risen again—■ as having been crucified with Christ, and that Christ liveth in him; for He, who never could have died on His own account, “died for us,” the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. By drinking all the cup of wrath which our sins deserved, by being made sin and a curse for

us, by fulfilling every jot and tittle of the law; “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,” and by giving us LIFE by His own quickening Spirit, we are united to Him who is raised from the dead; and “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” Therefore, the Holy Ghost thus exhorts us, “Let not sin reign in your mortal body;” having in the preceding verse directed our souls into the true position of faith, saying, “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11). Christ, having died unto sin once, dieth no more; and His people, having died in Him, now live unto God.

With Him we died upon the tree;

In Him we live above.

It is also on this account that the believer has new relationships, new responsibilities, and a new experience—he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. The risen Son a God is his Life, Righteousness, Strength, Hiding-place, Deliverer, Husband, Friend, Master, Way to God, Joy, Hope, Glory, &c. &c. He lives by the faith of Jesus, and walks in Him, knowing that all His springs are in Him. He has no happiness apart from Jesus; and peace and consolation, at all times, in the light of His gracious countenance; and his spirit is sustained and his goings are established by the unchangeable love and faithfulness of God his Saviour. How sweet to think that ■

While all things change, He changes not,

He ne'er forgets, though oft forgot;

His love's unchangeably the same,

And as enduring as His name!

The believer's contemplation of the sufferings and death of Christ increases his hatred of sin, for in that cross he sees the just judgment of it in the light of divine holiness; and the apprehension that he himself has been crucified and slain with Him, not only teaches him the utterly corrupt character of the flesh, but gives him power practically over it, and casts him with confidence upon that fullness which is treasured up for us in our risen and glorified Head.

Further, it is being “joined unto the Lord” that is the power of all fruit-bearing, by which we can do all things through Christ strengthening us, though without Him we can do nothing. Hence the need of practically living in communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and drawing new supplies by prayer and faith. Nothing can compensate for a lack of personal communion with God. The object of all ministry of the Word is to lead our souls into deeper and more abiding fellowship and walk with God. Our greatest danger is to imagine we can do without it, and thus be weak as others. There may be fleshly energy of a religions form, but it is not Christ-like—not spiritual. Our high and holy calling and standing in Christ Jesus, believingly known, inspires us with dictate for that which is carnal, and strengthens us to mortify our earthly and sensual propensities—to put off the old man, and to put on the new.

It is also as “risen with Christ,” that we are exhorted to exhibit this new life in every family relationship. The spiritual husband and wife are to represent Christ and the Church, both as regards love and subjection: parents are to train their children as Christ does: children to honor and obey their parents as “the holy child” did His Father: masters are to rule as knowing they have

a Master in heaven, and servants to obey after the pattern of Him who did not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

The same truth applies to our walk toward them that are without. We are exhorted to walk wisely, according to the example of Him “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and who said of us, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). It is because we are united to Him, whom the world crucified and the Father glorified, that we should be imitators of Him who died for the ungodly, but had no fellowship with them; and as we follow the steps of this Faithful Witness, our new life will freely flow forth to the glory of God. We are to walk in Him, who was “separate from sinners.”

It is also as the Church of the Living God that we are specially responsible for manifesting that we are “joined unto the Lord,” and “one spirit.” We are to remember our common salvation, our life, our union and standing in Christ Jesus; that there is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, &c. (Eph. 4:4-6.) As members of His body we are to know no man after the flesh, for Christ is all and in all; and never to let slip the truth, that because there is one spirit and one body, there is not only the Lord’s unceasing sympathy with us, but that there is also such sympathy between all those that are Christ’s, that “if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it,” &c. (1 Cor. 12:26); so that the daily walk and conduct of each member necessarily affects the whole body. We are, therefore, to maintain our family character as holy and elect brethren; to love one another as Christ has loved us; to forgive as Christ forgave us; to be holy as He is holy; to suffer for His sake, walk together in His steps, assemble together in His name, and so to show forth that we are truly and really one in Christ, that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus (John 17:21). It is quite true, as we have already seen, that we are spiritually one in Christ risen, but it is the will of God that this living unity should be so realized, cherished, and manifested by us, that we should condemn all contention, strife, and division, be of one heart and one soul, and aim at being “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Let us beware of saying this cannot be, but rather let us trust in Him with whom all things are possible, and receive the Spirit’s admonition to be of “the same mind in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2), that with one mind and one mouth we may glorify God (Rom. 15:6). True it is, that in the day of Christ the unity of the Church will be manifested in perfect and eternal beauty, and the world will then know that the Father has loved us, even as He loved Jesus; but the opportunity for the world to believe unto salvation will then be past; and the thought is very solemn.

How little we exemplify that we are “joined unto the Lord” and “one spirit!” Yet, for any little measure of it, let us thank God, and “strengthen the things which remain.” We may rest assured that any scriptural efforts thus to glorify God are very precious to Him who says, “If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Phil. 3:15). Let us, beloved, seek to cultivate it! Let us diligently promote, according to the Scriptures, fellowship in the spirit with all saints, and “whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Phil. 3:16).

Lastly, it is because we are bound in “the bundle of life,” that “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Every member of His body shall then be manifested without spot and blameless, whether they have slept in Jesus, or are alive and remain (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). How perfect the scene will then be! Not a little one shall be absent or marred,

for not a bone of Him was broken. How exceeding rich will be the testimony in that day, that “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit!”

DISCIPLINE. ■Whilst the Church of God should have no place for sin, it should have a place for, and should set a value upon, every member of Christ’s body. We should remember it is God’s Church, carry all difficulties to God and to Christ, and manage them not ourselves.

The Holy Scriptures

IT appears evident that God, by His Spirit, is leading many of His people at the present time to set an especial value upon His own Word. Many see that they have read it scarcely at all, others that they have read it in a wrong way, or that they have substituted something in the place of it, such as the word and writings of man, which in our day are so multiplied and profuse.

When we come to read God's pure word with faith and prayer alone, it seems like a new book. Passages we had long been familiar with have a new light shed upon them; truths, which in our wisdom we thought we had long mastered, and needed to learn no more, now become like the sweet oil or the heavenly manna; and elementary doctrines and simple statements we find to have a value and profit which we before knew nothing of. These methods of study, viz, faith and prayer, are divine methods. No wonder they produce such blessed results. May they be more known and manifested, as surely they will, if the children of God study the word of God for the heart rather than for the intellect. The true way to learn God's word is by putting it into practice. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do His commandments" (Ps. 111:10).

But the Holy Spirit is our only authorized Teacher, our recognized Interpreter. His interpretations, His teachings alone, we account genuine, and the word written on the fleshly tables of the heart, that only we account learning.

From Psalm 119 we learn the value set upon the word of God by one of old. He sets himself to compose a poem descriptive of the virtues and excellencies, the qualities and uses of this precious word. Each verse describes, more or less, some new and varied quality of the word of God. What a profitable study for the present day! The writer had proved the power, the preciousness, the value of the word. It seems to have been his source of light, his library of knowledge, his mine of wealth, his casket of treasure. This blessed book suits all times and all circumstances, adapting itself to youth, to maturity and to old age; being the comfort in affliction, the guide in darkness, the joy in adversity, the companion in prosperity; moreover, useful for cleansing, quickening, correcting, edifying, teaching, strengthening, healing, &c. &c.

Does not all that which is going on around us teach us to cultivate communion with the Scriptures, which alone give a just comment upon everything? And shall we not set them above all price, and be careful lest we put anything in place of them, whatever be its claims or its pretensions?

The panting, the longing for, the preventing the dawning of the morning, the making haste, and similar expressions, show what state of mind we should have in reference to the word of God.

2 Corinthians 4:17, 18; Psalms 30

The night of weeping, dark and drear,
Twill soon be past, forever past, Ps. 30.
The morn of joy so bright and clear,
Will come, and will forever last.
Affliction we may well call "light,"
It is "but for a moment" here,
For faith anticipates the sight 2. Cor. 4.
Of things which do "not yet appear."
That "moment" is indeed but "small." Isa. 54.
The heart of Love hath nam'd it so;
He bids His people hear His call,
He bids them well their hope to know.
For mercies great His saints shall have,
His tender hand will wipe their tears; is Isa. 25:8
Theirs are the joys of Heav'n above, Rev. 7:17
And "everlasting kindness" theirs. Isa. 54:8
Hear Jesus' voice, all ye who mourn, Ps. 126:8
The hungry, poor, despis'd, oppress'd, Matt. 5
Himself will come, who soon will turn Luke 6.
Your sorrows into perfect rest.
Then all shall prove your certain gain,
Hatred or smiting, grief or care;
Your tears exchanged for laughter then, Ps. 126.
Reproach no longer you shall bear.
Your mourning then shall all be o'er, Psalms 30.
Dancing and gladness take their place;

In comfort deep, in joy secure,
Your hearts shall praise redeeming grace.
You “sow in tears,” but soon in joy
You’ll reap the much desired gain;
Your harvest fruit hath no alloy, 1 Pet. 1.
Naught shall create a moment’s pain.
“Temptation” now, with mighty power,
Doth oft with “heaviness” cast down; 1 Peter 1.
But then that bright and coming hour,
Will all your hopes and wishes crown.
“Beauty for ashes” shall be giv’n, Isaiah 61.
Praise for a garment—glorious dress!
Praise, the unceasing song of Heav’n, Rev. 5.
“God and the Lamb” shall all confess.
“A little while,” in patience learn, Heb. 10:37.
Let faith and hope be ever strong; Heb. 10:92, 23.
For Jesus “quickly” will return Rev. 22.
Himself to lead this heav’nly song. Ps. 22:22

THE LORD’S DEALINGS. ■Let us not presume to explain all the Lord’s dealings with us■ His ways are past finding out (Rom. 11:33). Faith knows that He is leading us “by the right way” (Ps. 107:7), that all His paths are mercy and truth (Psa. 25:10), and that all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28). Faith interprets all by the cross of Christ■ “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32)

No Condemnation

“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” ■ Rom. 8:1.

There are two things contained in this inspired declaration of the apostle ■ first, the present standing of believers in Christ Jesus; and secondly, their character.

1. Their position as Christians is one of “no condemnation.” Though all around may accuse ■ yea, they may write bitter things against themselves ■ yet God justifieth from all things every believer in His Son Jesus Christ (Acts 13:39). In the days of Noah, judgment was upon the earth; nevertheless, all who had entered into the ark were preserved in perfect safety, and brought triumphantly through all the tribulation. In the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt, there was security from all harm for those who had sheltered themselves within the blood-sprinkled doorpost; so that when the Lord smote the first-born of all the families of Egypt with death, He passed over every house that He found sprinkled with the blood of the slain lamb. Also, when an Israelite had unwittingly killed a man, he was free from the power of the avenger of blood as soon as he entered the city of refuge which God had appointed. He was then, immediately in the place of safety, where there was “no condemnation.” And so now; the Lord Jesus is the True Ark to preserve all who trust in Him, His blood shelters all who believe in His name, and He is the mercy-seat ■ the city of refuge ■ the sure hiding-place ■ for all who flee to Him; and whoso cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). He having been made a curse for His people ■ having borne our sins in His own body on the tree, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, ■ no anger, no wrath, nothing condemnatory rains; so that the apostle can boldly say, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?”

It is by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that our souls are brought into this blessed standing, so that we are called to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” We are in Christ Jesus, as it is written, “He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me” (John 6:5, 6); and again, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:16). We stand in the full value of the worth and merit of another ■ THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And so it was with Abraham, “He believed in the Lord, and He counted it unto him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:6-8). Well may the apostle speak of the exceeding riches of the grace of God! O the infinite wisdom, power, and love of Jehovah, thus to bring righteousness without works to us in our lost condition, “even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe! Wondrous mercy, that the holy Son of God should remove our sins from us, and put His own perfect and everlasting righteousness upon us! But so it is; hence it is written, “There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

2. The character of the persons here alluded to is that “they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The unregenerate know no higher experience than gratifying the desires of the flesh and of the mind; but those who have believed the grace of God, exhibited in the gift of His only begotten Son, have life, are new creatures, have learned the unsatisfying character of things around, and their course and tendency. The grace that removed the bitterness of a self-condemning conscience, that melted and won the rebellious heart, the sense of being in a world that has crucified the Lord of glory, and the hopelessness of every earthly resource but Jesus crucified, endear Him to the affections; while an increasing understanding of the love of God, which passeth knowledge, the everlasting relationship subsisting between them and the Father, their safety and blessing in God their Saviour, and the eternal glory to which they are called, constrain them, more and more, to live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. How can I please God? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ and such like, are the heart-queries of those who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Many a time have they vainly sought happiness in that which is carnal, but now the soul’s satisfying portion is Jesus, the “chiefest among ten thousand,” the “altogether lovely.” According to His mind, and in obedience to His Word, they now seek to walk; for they prove, experimentally, that they have no real happiness apart from Him. They are led of the Spirit to worship and serve God as their Father; their joy consists in apprehending and appropriating the things that are freely given to them of God, and their hope is to be with Him and like Him, whom having not seen they love. The desires of the flesh and of the mind, which they once so fondly cherished, and sought to gratify, are now loathsome and offensive, and their great grief is that they do not more fully mortify the old man with his affections and lusts, and more perfectly show forth the characteristics of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Lord! strengthen Thou our faith, that we may “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,” and “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called!”

Luke 10:38-42; John 12:2-9

IT is the household character of this scene at Bethany that makes it so touching and instructive. The Lord was there, and gave His testimony concerning the walk of the inmates of the house, or of some of them at least; and that too while family duties were being carried on. And is it not especially in the home circle that the true character of each of us is most clearly manifested? A degree of propriety in out-of-door behavior may, in some instances, be maintained by the usages of society and religious custom; but the quiet fire-side—the family circle and its various employments, when the soul feels far removed from many a discerning eye—often reveals the true measure of genuine affection and zeal for Christ.

Little indeed have any learned of Jesus, who have not been constrained by His love to the formation of domestic habits and ways of a spiritual and an unworldly stamp. The too common thought is, that practical Christianity mainly consists in tangible and busy acts of outward service—some great visible exhibitions. It is a natural thought. The human intellect, untaught of the Holy Ghost, cannot rise higher in its conceptions than that quality of service which can meet the eye of our fellow-men; but this is phariseeism. It is on the heart that God's eye specially rests, as He tells us in His Word, "I the Lord search the heart." "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh at the heart." "He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man: the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." And is not that blessed Spirit which dwelleth in us often saying, "Take heed to thyself;" "Study to show thyself approved unto God," &c.? Assuredly it is so; and He not only frequently reminds us that vital godliness is all LOVE, but makes us feel that communion with God is our very element; and that times, places, and circumstances, are but so many opportunities for obeying and glorifying His holy name.

Such thoughts as these suggest themselves while contemplating a little the lovely scene of the supper at Martha's house. An unworldly atmosphere indeed pervaded that highly favored habitation. That Lowly One whom the world hated, and whom the Samaritan villagers just before would not receive, was heartily welcomed there. Martha's heart was the Lord's, and, therefore, Martha's house. She "received Him into her house." And this was not all, for "every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him;" and thus it was with her. Jesus was not alone; He had disciples with Him, who were welcome too; and, accordingly, a supper was prepared for the refreshment of the guests whom Martha had so cordially received. The visitors were poor we know, and some at least were unlearned and ignorant fishermen. Nor does it appear that Martha was very wealthy, so she seems to have been without a handmaid to assist her even in the necessary family duties. Still, however that might be, Christ and His disciples were welcome. It was not love in word, but in deed and in truth. Let us ponder this scene a little, and may the Eternal Spirit speak to our hearts in so doing. We cannot receive the Lord into our houses and exclude His disciples. Our love to the brethren is the just criterion of our love to Him. If the door of a house be shut to the Lord's disciples, Christ is excluded, for "Inasmuch," says He, "as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to ME" (Matt. 25:45). It is one thing to maintain a

formal acknowledgment of God in the family, keeping a hospitable table for any visitors who may perchance drop in, and another to receive Christ and those that are Christ's ■ to serve Christ practically, owning Him in matters of detail as the Master of the house. The latter is the work of faith and love, while self-seeking, in some form or other, may be the moving spring of the former. It was more than hospitality in its warmest sense that characterized the supper at Bethany, for there was unfeigned submission to Christ as the rightful Lord and Ruler of the family. And is not this recognition of the presence and power of the Lord, in the guidance and arrangement of household matters, the test whether Christ is received into our houses or not? And will not our actions in the several duties of the family as serving Him, as also the quiet waiting at His feet for help and strength, be the certain accompaniments of a simple apprehension of Christ, as the Master of the house? There will be no sectarian selection of visitors then, no reception of guests on carnal principles; but a voluntary submission of spirit to Him who said, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42). Is it so with us beloved? Do our ready hands and hearts thus receive and welcome Him? Are we His willing guests, whilst owning Him as Master in our houses?

What a wide field of service is the family circle, the needful domestic occupations, and the attendance at the daily circumstances that may be brought before us! If Christ be faithfully served in little things, there is not much danger of His being forgotten by us in greater matters. If we glorify Christ in our houses, it will not be moving out of the same path to honor Him in a more extensive sphere. If we fail in the smaller circle, how shall we be found in the larger? Is not carnal confidence often manifested by us in what are commonly called little matters more than in circumstances of great extremity? Martha had no difficulty in making Christ her refuge when Lazarus was dying, but in the little common-place business of preparing and serving a supper, she was not so sensible of her weakness and need. Let it, beloved, be our constant aim and purpose of heart to acknowledge Him in ALL OUR WAYS, and to surrender to His infinitely wise, gracious, and almighty control, our houses, our families, our all. And this must be, if we would have either the Lord's approving testimony, or His loving, faithful rebuke.

But blessed as it was in Martha to open her house to Christ and His disciples, to serve, and in a measure to own Him as the Master, still she failed. Her speedy exertions to provide a refreshing meal for the guests exhibited both genuineness of affection and welcome. But she forgot that without Christ she could do nothing. Her delight was to serve, and her soul was set upon much serving; quantity, rather than the quality of the service, was the principal thought. The resources for this "MUCH serving" ought to have been the point, but it was not so; neither the consideration as to how far her course was acceptable to the Lord. The labor and toil she did not mind, provided she could accomplish her desire of "much serving;" but it ended, as might have been expected, in perplexity and prostration of spirit. She "was cumbered about much serving." To serve the Lord, of course, should be our unceasing purpose; but to set about the Lord's work in our own way is not well-pleasing in His sight; and, if we do so, results of weakness and failure should not surprise us. Excitement, stir, and busy activity, may sometimes accompany warmth of heart toward Christ; but they are not the legitimate expressions of love; and such things should always awaken our suspicions, and lead us to self-judgment, as much as the opposite extreme of a lethargic and slothful temperament. The Master of the house is holy, and He looks for holy and reverential

services as well as for pure and holy motives; and although, when we fail of this, He may graciously accept our poor endeavors, as He partook of Martha's supper, nevertheless, instead of His response of praise, the scene will not close without its deserved rebuke.

But there was another woman in the house at Bethany, whom also Jesus loved. She was far less prominent in the beginning of the scene, but much more so in the end. Mary's impelling motive was to please and glorify the Lord; but she knew experimentally something of the meaning of our Lord's words, "The flesh profiteth nothing;" and also, that "to obey is better than sacrifice;" whilst her apprehensions of the wisdom and grace of Christ, made her feel keenly her own unworthiness. The quality rather than the quantity of service, and care how she should please the Lord, rather than much serving, were the guiding thoughts of her mind, and led her at once to sit at His feet to receive of Him, in order to dispense to hear His word, in order to serve acceptably. She thus welcomed the Lord and honored Him too. Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." Not only did she know that He was her Saviour and her Friend, but she also knew that He was the STRENGTH of her heart, and her portion forever; therefore she made choice of that one thing needful, that "good part" of waiting upon the Lord. This was beginning well, and beyond Martha's attainment. Christ was all with Mary; her affection was set upon the Lord Himself, and her necessities and sense of unworthiness brought her to Him lowly, yet confident, for she sat at His feet. But no marvel if such self-renouncing service of faith and love meet with opposition. To the carnal eye, it appears little better than an ill expenditure of time, and even those of the Lord's people who are not walking in communion with Him may possibly be found giving heed to a censorious impulse concerning it. Even Martha appeared neither to understand, nor to be pleased with her sister's lowly attitude. She was "cumbered about much serving," while Mary seemed doing little; and instead of finding the cause of her perplexity in herself in her own state of soul she found fault with Mary for her lack of assistance, and with the Lord for not sending her sister to her help. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." All this is full of deep heart-searching instruction; reflecting, as in a glass, the condition of our own hearts when we step out of the path of communion with God. That path alone is the light which can make manifest to us our deformities and shortcomings, though rather than submit to the humiliating discovery, we are prone to misjudge and censure others.

It is well to observe here, that though, speaking naturally, the house was Martha's, yet she owns Christ as the Master, and looks to Him to send Mary to her help, although this subjection was connected with much weakness and infirmity. Her Spirit was not in communion with the Lord, therefore she lacked spiritual intelligence, self-judgment, and charity; and thought hardly, and judged wrongly of her sister. Not being in the light, as He is in the light, she could not judge or act according to the Lord. She was serving, it is true, and Jesus was the object of her service; that was precious; but she was not sensible of her utter inability even to arrange domestic matters so as to please God; therefore her fancied strength was real weakness, and her imaginary wisdom manifested itself in folly. After all she came to the Lord, and her appeal to Him was not in vain, though no doubt the response was different to what she had calculated on. Had she judged herself, she would not have been judged, and rebuke would have been spared. The Lord who loved her knew her real need better than she did herself, and He at once directed her to a truer understanding of her own heart, and justified Mary. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not

be taken away from her.” Very solemn, but a needed rebuke: piercing and painful, though tender and salaryhumbling, yet truly faithful and seasonable. A sad closing up of Martha’s history, but not of her history only. May the Lord lay it much on our hearts!

Mary is silent■she says nothing, because she can trust much. To justify or commend herself would not accord with the dignity of her position. She sits at the feet of Jesus. The fear of the Lord divests her of every other fear. She pleases Him, that is enough for her, notwithstanding it may elicit censure from another, and that even from one whom Jesus loved. But the Lord has no rebuke for Mary; He gives an unmistakable testimony of His approval. And does this lowly follower sit at His feet in vain? Is it time wasted? Is it doing nothing? The sequel answers. She “heard His want” that word which her soul so ardently craved; that word which was “spirit and life.” Her heart well knew, that all her springs were in Him, and that those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. And who can tell the sweetness of the communications that passed between them? The self-emptied vessel was at the Fountain of living waters, and what could result, but the overflowing’s of consolation, as well as fruit, and continuous communications of divine energy and strength? If we really sit at the Lord’s feet to hear His word, there must be practical results■ “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” And thus this precious narrative proceeds, “Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair” (John 12:3). Her heart was too full for utterance, and it must vent itself in loving, grateful action. The “very costly” ointment was willingly and gratefully expended in glorifying Him.

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my life, my soul, my all,

was the silent language of her heart while performing this service of love. What ease, what holy dignity and reverence characterize this delightful scene! No cumbrous feelings are evinced, no fault-finding exclamations escape her lips, but all is love, because Christ is ALL.

But “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12): and the enemy has an agent at hand to seek to bring this blessed service into disrepute. He accuses her of waste, forgetfulness of the poor, &c. Hard words, indeed! and very bold to give utterance to them while the whole “house was filled with the odor of the ointment!” But Mary could well afford to meet the buffetings of the adversary with humble silence, because there was One present who was able and willing to plead her cause. Jesus replied, “Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this: for the poor always ye have with you: but Me ye have not always.” Blessed conclusion of Mary’s service—she began with Christ and ended with Christ. He was, truly, in a practical sense, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last of her heart. She took a lowly place, and the Lord exalted her; and the Scripture was fulfilled, “Them that honor me, I will honor.” She had rebuke and persecution, but withal, the Lord’s approving smile. There was tranquility of spirit within, because her mind was stayed upon the Lord; and this living fellowship enabled her to bear both the reproof of her sister, and the hard speeches of Judas. All this teaches us the value of Mary’s choice, and that “one thing is needful,” if we desire to please God; for though we are “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” still, we cannot bring forth fruit, except we practically abide in Him, as He said, “Without Me ye can do nothing.”

Meditation on Colossians 2:10

“Ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power.”

SIT down, my soul, and consider this sweet Scripture, in dependence on the Holy Ghost; and although in thy present finite condition it is impossible to grasp the full measure of blessing contained in it, nevertheless, it may be, that through the kindness of thy dear Lord, thou mayest obtain for thy thirsty soul a drink of that “river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.”

First of all, mark well that the Scriptures nowhere direct thee to expect perfection in thyself, but IN ANOTHER, even in Jesus, who is raised from the dead, and exalted far above all heavens, angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto Him; and therefore, the apostle in the preceding chapter informs us, that the great aim of his ministry was to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (ch. 1:28).

Secondly, notice that it is in Christ risen, in whom is all fullness, that the grace of God hath given thee this glorious completeness. He was made flesh that He might be thy Sin-bearer, reconcile thee to God, and be perfectly obedient for thee, even unto death; but having finished the work and overcome all thine enemies through death, He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and highly exalted far above every name. The true Corn of Wheat which fell into the ground and died is now no longer alone. It hath brought forth much fruit (John 12:24). This fruit is His redeemed, as the prophet foretold, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied; “and now, O my soul, thou art married” to Him, who is raised from the dead, that thou shouldest bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4). Hence, thou art further instructed by the apostle, that though by nature thou wert dead in sins, yet by grace, through faith, thou art “raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). Thus, while the Scriptures speak of thy body being dead because of sin, and of being in this world of wickedness and sorrow, still, blessed be God, it also reveals thy standing in Him who is Me Head of all principality and power.

Thirdly, consider, this great and glorious blessedness is thy present standing in God’s account, ■ “Ye are complete in Him.” It is a record of what thy Covenant God hath done for thee, through the death and resurrection of His dear Son, without any creature help whatever. Hath thy Surety died unto sin? then hast thou died with Him. Hath God accepted and exalted Him as thy substitute? then hath God also accepted and exalted thee in Him. And, therefore, for thy consolation and that of all the redeemed, thy dear Lord says “because I live, ye shall live also.” Even “now,” saith the Holy Ghost, there is “no condemnation,” for “Christ hath died, yea, rather is risen again.” Even “now are we the sons of God.” How rich and great is the mercy of thy Saviour-God!

Fourthly, think in what thy blessedness consists; for it is plain that all the perfections of the Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant are thine. “Ye are complete in Him.” Thou hast, therefore, among other and unfathomable realities, ETERNAL LIFE, “hid with Christ in God;” for “he that believeth in Him hath everlasting life.” EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS is also thine; “for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4).

ETERNAL GLORY is thy happy portion also; for “the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them,” said Jesus (John 17:22).

Lastly, see to it that thou dost fully embrace this volume of divine grace for thine own personal comfort; for it is very clear that the apostle, upon hearing from Epaphras of the “faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all saints” of those dear ones at Colosse, was able thus to write to them; for these two cardinal points of real unfeigned Christianity were the plainest proofs that Christ was in them, and, therefore, that they were in Christ. Therefore, my soul, thou art assured, that to all who have “faith in Christ Jesus, and love to all saints,” the Spirit of God says, “YE are complete in Him.” Refrain then, O my soul, from looking at thy feelings so much for comfort, for thou dost painfully prove that the flesh is flesh still—it “lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh” —and when thou wouldst do good, evil is present with thee! Surely it is only the subtle pride of thy heart that makes thee so anxiously search thyself for something good, and which, oftentimes, either puffs thee up with self-righteousness, or casts thee down almost to despair! O my soul, hear day by day, what the blessed Comforter hath recorded for thy consolation—“YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM;” also, that “ALL things are yours, for YE ARE CHRIST’S, AND CHRIST IS GOD’S!” Never forget that these truths are unalterably fixed and settled—they are a foundation that never can be moved, on which thou mayest rest in perfect peace and undisturbed security; and, though the stormy winds of adversity, temptation or bereavement beat against thee, thy hopes and consolations will be unmoved, for they are in Christ Jesus—grounded and settled upon the eternal Rock of Ages. Oh the mercy of being called from darkness to light! of being made a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed! a possessor of eternal life and righteousness through faith! Grace! Grace! Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb forever and ever! Amen and Amen.

Sitting at the Feet of Jesus

IF we would be teachers of others, we must be learners ourselves. If we cease to keep our place at the feet of Jesus in prayer and meditation on His blessed word, we soon begin to think that we know something; but while sitting there we find and feel our own poverty and ignorance; yet what we do learn there, we learn to profit, and are encouraged to expect, and stirred up to ask, that more and more may be unfolded to us, by the Spirit, of the truth as it is in Jesus: our meditations of Him become sweet to the soul, and as we handle Him by faith our fingers drop with sweet-smelling myrrh (Song 5). This is needful, not for public teachers only, but for the present peace, the soul's health, the real happiness, the joyful liberty of the most retiring and unobserved of God's children. It is only in the measure that we are receivers, through the Spirit, of the fullness that is in Jesus, that we shall have anything profitable to say for Him in our private intercourse with men, whether converted or unconverted. Let not past failure discourage us. He giveth more grace. He upbraideth not, If in our own little measure we find it "more blessed to give than to receive," what must be the joy of His heart to let His fullness flow into the channels which His grace opens in the contrite hearts of His redeemed■His brethren (John 20); hearts which long to know more of Him■which thirst for closer, and yet closer communion with Him in whose presence, now realized by faith, is fullness of joy (1 John 1:3, 4).

Affliction

AFFLICTION'S sweet when we can trace,
In every pang, the God of grace;
In every sorrow see His love,
Receive each stroke from God above:
Our Father He delights to skew,
How rich the mercies from Him flow.
Affliction's sweet when we can say,
Though only in a feeble war,
"Lord, at Thy feet I love to lie,
"O guide my heart by Thine own eye,
"And let not any thought lurk there
"That cannot be expressed in prayer!"
Affliction's sweet, though it come near ■
Even to rend from those most dear, ■
While we, by faith, can humbly trace
The smiles of our Beloved's face,
And hear Him say, "It is Thy God
Who uses thus His chast'ning rod."
Affliction's sweet, when, by His grace,
We every circumstance can place
In God our Father's hand, and see
He knoweth better far than we,
How to correct our wayward hearts,
In faithful love, though causing smarts.
Affliction's sweet ■ yea, very sweet,
When we can say, "'Tis more than meet

That we should lay self-glory down,
Low at Thy Cross,"■as there 'tis shown
How great the Father, Spirit, Son!
Complete apart! complete in One!

Genesis 15

THERE are various measures of faith. We read of “little faith,” “great faith,” and the “full assurance of faith.” With “little faith” doubts are found associated: hence our Lord’s rebuke to Peter, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” But it is sweet to notice, that our blessed Lord, in this very remonstrance, does not pass by the “faith” of His servant because it is “little;” no, it is “faith,” however weak, however feeble, and inestimably precious too, because Himself is its object. Thus He most carefully separates the precious fruit of the Spirit from the vile workings of unbelief which the flesh mingles with it. And we may remark also, how ready our Lord always was for such gracious work, and that He never refused, but most heartily welcomed and encouraged, any proportion of faith, however feeble. “Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief,” was not too mean a cry to reach the compassionate ear of Jesus, as its results proved. If the unclean leper had questionings about the willingness of Jesus to cleanse him, and could only count upon His ability to do so, when he said, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean;” even this appeal called forth an abundant response: “Jesus put forth His hand, and touched Him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed” (Matt. 8:2, 3). And so, again, when the blind men followed Him, they seemed little able to reckon on more than the power of Jesus to open their eyes; yet His gracious ear was open to their cry, and immediately they received their sight (Matt. 9:28).

And it strikes me we do well to ponder these things, and lay to heart the ready welcome, and the sure results of trust in God. And though our joy in the Lord, and success in service, will be according to our faith, yet, the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe, whatever the measure of faith may be. In the history of Abraham (Gen. 15) we are furnished with not only a striking example of the difference between faith and the assurance of faith, but also with the blessed fact, that though Abraham’s persuasion and enjoyment of the blessings of God increased with his faith and spiritual understanding, nevertheless that his standing before God as a righteous person was connected with his faith, even when it was so small that he lacked the assurance of it. The father of the faithful had, in the obedience of faith, looked at the stars of heaven, and received the testimony of God; and consequently, was at once brought into the blessed standing of grace: “He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (vs. 6). But though the patriarch “believed” the word of Jehovah, yet he wanted the full persuasion of his own personal participation in the blessings—the “full assurance of faith” ■ “Whereby,” said he, “shall I know that I shall inherit it?” (vs. 8). Very sweet and blessed it is to enjoy the full assurance of the gospel of the grace of God, but it is well to observe, that Abraham’s standing, as righteous before God, was not because of his assurance of faith, but because “he believed in the Lord:” which, like many other portions of Holy Scripture, shows us that “all who believe” (however large or small their measure of faith) “are justified from all things.” And, O beloved, how precious it is for any of the Lord’s household who mourn over their weakness of faith, distrustfulness, or doubt, to find here so clearly recorded the blessed doctrine of “righteousness without works,” and that as the portion of all believers, even of those who can

exercise but a feeble measure of faith in the record God has given of His Son. The Apostle Paul, when treating of this subject, seeks to “comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak,” by showing that righteousness was reckoned to Abraham when he was in uncircumcision; that is, that it was entirely of grace, and independent of ordinances or attainment of any kind (Rom. 4).

But Abraham sought of Jehovah the assurance of faith—he followed on to know the Lord: he desired an unquestioning, unstaggering persuasion of his personal interest in the blessings of grace ■ “Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?” and in this, his example may well be followed. Abraham’s request was large, but the grace sought was not withheld. To him that hash shall be given. His desire was speedily granted; though, perhaps, like many in the present day, who say, “Lord, increase our faith,” he little thought what a process it would be needful for him to pass through ere he obtained it. If we would have a larger measure of the faith of the gospel, we must have an increased acquaintance with Him who is the alone Object of faith. Abraham, therefore, is at once referred to God’s sacrifice ■ “Take Me an heifer of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto Him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds divided he not” (vss. 9, 10). I say it was God’s sacrifice; the command was, “Take unto Me,” &c., and the patriarch regarded it as such in a spirit of reverence and worship, for “when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abraham drove them away” (vs. 11). And, surely, it is by an increasing knowledge of Him who is God’s Fellow, and God’s Sacrifice for sin, by basking in the beams of Immanuel’s love, by receiving divine instruction touching the glorious Person, worth, and work of the Great Mystery of godliness, that “little faith” grows into the “full assurance.” What lessons the Holy Ghost here opens to our souls! What simplicity, wisdom, power, grace, and glory are here manifest, in the response of the God of grace to the inquiry of Abraham, “Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?” Do we not learn from this touching narrative, that the ministry of God to our souls is CHRIST, that the food and nourishment of our faith is the flesh and blood of CHRIST, that the glory of God is seen only in the face of JESUS CHRIST, and that our confidence in the “exceeding great and precious promises” will grow, just as a believing and spiritual understanding of CHRIST is cultivated and cherished by us. But while we do well to press forward, to grow in grace, to aim continually after deeper and still deepening conformity to Jesus, we should also earnestly seek after establishment and settlement of spirit in the blessed grace which counts righteousness for faith. Our experiences change, persons and things fail, and everything under the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit. JEHOVAH CHANGES NOT. In Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. His covenant is everlasting; His promises are all in Christ yea, and in Him Amen: and the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, perpetual in its efficacy, and forever secure to those who trust in the Lord (Psa. 125:1). May the Holy Ghost keep us close to Jesus, looking unto Him, waiting upon Him, learning of Him, delighting in Him, receiving from Him, that being melted by His unsearchable love, we may be moulded more and more into His blessed image!

I would say a word on the experience of Abraham while thus following on to know the Lord. Though God imputes righteousness to him, the patriarch does not always feel happy, not even when near the sacrifice. Let none imagine that the presence of God is only accompanied with peace and joy. It was not so with Abraham, even when he was reverentially guarding God’s sacrifice ■ “a deep sleep fell upon Abraham, and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him” ■ a darkness, indeed, that was felt. There is nothing singular in this; for the nearer we approach “THE

LIGHT” the more are the hidden things of darkness made manifest. In learning the majesty, wisdom, grace, holiness, and power of God, we discover the folly, hatefulness, sinfulness, and weakness of ourselves; and this, though humbling and painful, is nevertheless profitable experience. But it is experience: and I always desire to keep before my own soul that no feelings within can alter or affect a believer’s standing, as having the righteousness of faith. The sole object of faith is One outside ourselves, even Christ, who “is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” We have peace and joy in believing, though tribulation may be all around us. And sorrowful circumstances the patriarch was instructed to expect for his seed; they were to “be strangers in a strange land, and to be afflicted,” &c.; nevertheless, whatever be the path, the circumstances, or the inward feelings, the unchangeable word of consolation concerning the father of the faithful was, “he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.”

“Without one thought that’s good to plead,

Oh, what could shield me from despair,

But this, though I am vile indeed,

The Lord my righteousness is there?”

The smoking furnace and the burning lamp, which passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, chewed forth God’s trial and estimate of the value of His own offering for sin; and the gracious declaration, that “the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham,” plainly implied His savor of rest in that sacrifice, and His acceptance in the Beloved of His believing “friend.” It is well also to observe, that this is followed with a detailed account of the inheritance God gave to Abraham. And now I presume the “horror of great darkness” is dissipated by Faith’s view of the covenant love, faithfulness, and power of the God of promise. How blessed to perceive the unfailing security of the believer in Christ, forever settled and established “through the blood of the everlasting covenant!” O that we may “abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming!”

Prayer.

No. 2

PRAYER holds a very important place in Scripture, much more so than is generally felt. None will deny its value, yet how often does our want of confidence in God's readiness to hear, appear in times of sorrow and difficulty. We sometimes run from one broken cistern to another, forget a throne of grace, and that "with God all things are possible." How often do we call forth the Lord's rebuke, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

I shall refer to some leading examples of prayer, hoping to encourage the faith of God's people, and to show the great necessity there is for it at all times, as being the medium through which so much blessing flows. I begin with the Exodus of Israel. The blood of the victim brought them out of Egypt. Through the prayers of Moses they were sustained in the wilderness, guarded against danger, and the constant recipients of blessing from the hand of God. He gave to Israel, on many occasions, the most distinct testimony that He would be inquired of, and that He was a prayer-hearing God. The blood had given them a place in the presence of God, and they must now, in the blessedness of their standing, by prayer, draw from God supplies for all their need. He established a testimony in Jacob....that the children which should be born might set their hope in God (Psa. 78:5-7).

A servant of Christ should expect frequent trial in His service. God only can sustain him: he must daily come to Him for supplies, both for his own need and that of the people whom he serves and cares for. Israel had scarcely left Egypt when they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron. The very persons who under God, had wrought their deliverance were now the objects of their complaint. These murmurings lasted the forty years' pilgrimage; no matter how plainly God stood with His servants, and judged Israel for their complaints, spite of all, they still murmured. Paul, in his day, had to experience the same ingratitude. Prayer was the resort of both Moses and Paul. They, with their blessed Master could say, "For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer (See Exodus 16, 17) Trials from within are more difficult to meet and to bear, than those from without. Moses overcame both by prayer. Let us trace this. "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand" (Ex. 17:8, 9). Aaron and Hur accompanied Moses. "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Ex. 17:12, 13). How truly interesting and important is this narrative. As the battle was the Lord's, so was the victory. He heard and answered the cry of Moses, a memorial of Amalek's final overthrow was written, and an altar to God was built, with this blessed inscription ■ "Jehovah Nissi" ■ The Lord my banner. What a banner! How far better than our empty cisterns and arms of flesh! Surely our bow will abide in strength, when our confidence rests undisturbed in the mighty God of Jacob!

The next great scene in Israel's history is the giving of the Law, and then the setting up of the Tabernacle. Moses was forty days in the Mount, neither eating bread nor drinking water, receiving instructions from God. He descends from the Mount full of glory and honor; but as glory and honor abound, so also do sorrow and trial in relation to the flock of God, not from without so much as from within. Aaron, who had been joined to Moses in the work of the Lord, and in the service of Israel's redemption, his spokesman to Pharaoh, and one who had upheld his hands in Israel's conflict with Amalek, had left the holy Mount, made a golden calf, and led all Israel to worship it. The same person who had been instrumental in causing all Israel to believe the Word of the Lord, to bow their heads and worship Jehovah (Ex. 4:29, 31), now leads the people to the worship of the golden calf. What a serious lesson! "To which of the saints wilt thou turn?" is the divine inquiry; and surely this period of Israel's history gives a solemn emphasis to the injunction, "Put not your trust in princes." Such, however, was the mournful scene that Moses was called to witness, when he descended from the holy Mount full of glory and blessing. And what was to be done? He could not go on as God's dispenser of blessing to the people, but he gives himself unto prayer, and he prevailed: "Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord: peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). "And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also. And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time" (Deut. 9:18-20). His forty days' fasting and prayer were the means of saving Aaron and Israel from being destroyed. What grace and power we have seen in this man of God! We only want the like faith in these days to revive the whole Church of God. He did not seek his own things. God's glory and the salvation of His people lay nearer his heart than any personal consideration. His self-denial was very remarkable "Moses said unto the Lord, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Ex. 32:31, 32).

The ark was scarcely set forward on its journey when the people again complained, and displeased the Lord. The fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed them in the uttermost parts of the camp. Moses prayed unto the Lord, and the fire was quenched (Num. 11:2).

On the borders of the land, at the end of their forty years' pilgrimage, the people again complain. The brazen serpent was the answer to the prayer of Moses. Blessed answer! proclaimed to Nicodemus, and ratified on Calvary by the blood of the Son of God! "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Num. 21:6-8).

I have only traced a few leading features in Israel's history in connection with prayer, and the blessings resulting therefrom. Its instruction to us is very important. Moses was a constant intercessor on behalf of the people of the Lord; and, through prayer and faith, we find that Amalek is overcome at Rephidim; Aaron and many of the people whom he had turned aside are saved

from destruction: at Taberah the fire is quenched; on the borders of the land the bite of the fiery serpent is healed, &c. &c.

The glory of God in His people was dearer to Moses than all beside. He could have found many a reason, on the occasions referred to, to abandon them, had he a mind to do so, but he chose a more excellent way, and so proved a saviour to Israel, and their true shepherd, under God. He met Satan, both within and without, and came off triumphantly by the power of believing prayer. The victory over Amalek was to stand for an everlasting memorial of his overthrow, and, in type of all the enemies of Israel. But as we have before noticed, as blessings came on Moses from the hand of God, so did trial follow from the people; his refuge was in God, by prayer. How blessed to have a throne of grace to go to in every time of need! O for that spirit of grace and supplication which brings down from the courts above an olive branch of peace, proclaiming the deliverance of the true Israel of God!

Stand in Awe of His Word

“My heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.” ■ Ps. 119:101

THE skin of Moses' face so shone when he came down from the presence of God, that Aaron and all the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him (Ex. 34:30). When of old the God of glory descended upon Mount Sinai, there was a thick cloud, and fire, “and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.” Without one who should stand between them and God, the children of Israel could not endure the sight, nor the word spoken. Therefore “the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal. 3:19.) They received the law by the disposition of angels (Acts 7). And now when Moses came down from “the place of the sight of the glory of the Lord,” a veil ministered between his brightness and the people. When Ezekiel saw the throne “in the visions of God by the river of Chebar,” between it, and the living creatures that bore it, was interposed the likeness of the firmament, and the appearance of fire, to mark the immeasurable distance between it and He who sat thereon, (who is the Head of all principality and power) and them. O child of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, brought nigh as thou art to Him by the shed blood of Christ, and perfected forever by that one offering, having also confidence to enter into the holiest of all, in fellowship with the Father and the Son, let thy heart stand in awe of His Word!

God dwelt between the cherubim, and none but Moses or Aaron could go before the veil to hear the voice of God speak from the mercy-seat and throne of grace ■ to hear and to receive the lively oracles. If, when of old, God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake by the prophets, and they to whom the Word was thus brought were charged to circumcise their hearts and their ears, now that He hath spoken by His Son, are the gracious words which come forth from His lips less in majesty through their sweetness?

Moses' slowness of speech veiled (as was indeed needful) the words which, in their depths to faith, were spirit and life. Moses' veil covered that Truth which was from the beginning, and which waited for the fullness of time to be seen, heard, and handled (1 John 1) Yet to see, to hear, to handle, to taste, to perceive the fragrance thereof as thou shouldest and wouldest, O redeemed and reconciled child, let thy heart stand in awe of His Word!

Wouldest thou search into the things that are thine? Let Him who is the wisdom and power of God descend unto thee. Wouldest thou ascend whither He who is thine has entered in as thy Forerunner? Let the Father and the Son come and make their abode in a heart emptied of all things, purified through faith ■ a heart capable, by the Holy Ghost, of taking in as its own the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Though the darkness has passed away, and the True Light shineth, still thou halt that which is “enmity against God.” The flesh, which lusteth against the Spirit; the body of sin and death in which thou dolt groan, being burdened, turns away from, and refuses the manifestation of the glory of God in the person of Christ, as much as ever the uncircumcised heart of Israel of old did from

the then appointed way of God's drawing nigh unto them. They knew not the Cross, which is thy glory. There was no Cross presented openly to their gaze, as to ours; but to receive Christ into the heart in living power, to be able to say, "I know in whom I have believed, I know Him who is Holy and True, I know Him and the power of His resurrection: this is to stand in awe of His Word.

Light

Unbelief is the shutter of the mind, keeping all dark within:
When Grace unbars the shutter, the willing light pours in,
And darkness, without effort of its own, recedes,
Driven by the force of light to make its own escape.
Till light breaks in, the eye, however sound, no object can behold;
'Tis light alone makes manifest.
All solid peace that the mind of man enjoys,
It owes to the penetration of God's light into his soul;
Hence we find it written in the Psalms,
"In Thy light shall we see light."
Faith 's but a bubble, a notion floating in the mind, an airy fancy
Save for the Object it beholds, the Source from whence it springs,
Then, looking through the open'd shutter of the mind,
Jesus, the Light of Life, and Sun of Righteousness,
Himself comes in and makes us glad.

A Word to the Solitary

To any dear child of God walking in solitariness, in comparative isolation, I would say a word. Do you not oftentimes feel this irksome? and do you not wish and sigh for something that would, you think, dispel the sadness you feel? Do you not sometimes feel it painful to have no one with whom you could converse about the things of God? and have you not at such times been gladdened by the presence of a friend, and found your load lightened by mere conversation, whether about the things of God or not? At such seasons, have you not felt as if you could not be happy alone with God; but that you wanted something besides Him to make you happy? I speak to you who have been brought into this path, partly through a desire to walk with the Lord, and partly, perhaps, because the Lord sees you need chastisement. Well, then, how do you behave under your discipline? You feel that the Lord is leading you through a wilderness: do you, as the Jews did, shut up to God, lust after the flesh-pots of Egypt again? Is the solitariness and isolation of the wilderness insupportable to you? Are you unhappy and discontented with having the Lord alone for your portion? (Num. 11:5, 6). If it be so, I would say, seek grace to bow down under the mighty hand of God. Be assured He has something to teach you. It may be to lead you a little deeper into the knowledge of your own heart, the wickedness and utter worthlessness of the flesh, the satanic character of the heart, which, having God for its portion, lusts after Egypt's food. Perhaps you need to be taught new truth, or to have known truth deepened.

Bow before the Lord, seek to have your heart in sympathy with His discipline. He disciplines in love; the profit will be yours. In due time he will add to your happiness; just now it might absorb your thoughts, and close your heart against Him.

Eph. 6:18, 19, 20

It has been well said, "If thou prayest for thyself alone, thou prayest for thyself alone:" that is, if we are always looking on our own things, and unmindful of the things of others, we are in the end great losers. We gradually fail of the perfect grace of God in which we are set, and become incapable of receiving or communicating the blessings God would, through such exercises of heart before Himself, cause us to partake of and enjoy. The Word shows, by many examples, how God the Almighty governs the world; it having in it His witnesses, remembrancers, and servants, through whose prayers He puts forth His glorious power according to His own will. I will only refer to Joshua, Elijah, Hezekiah, and Samuel of old, as examples of this; and if Paul so earnestly desired the prayers of "all saints," he no less lovingly and perseveringly presented supplications on their behalf. If, indeed, my heart knows brotherly love and charity, which is the bond of perfectness, it must turn, without effort, and naturally as it were, to such holy and blessed exercises. I can conceive nothing more acceptable to God in the way of service, who has so wrought to bring it about., than the mingling together, and coming up before Him through Christ, of this most sweet incense, mutual intercessions in the love of the Spirit.

The apostle James says, "The inwrought, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This expression, "inwrought," brings before us the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, dwelling in us, within the deepest depths of our spirit, the power which worketh in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure, lifting up our poor hearts into fellowship with the Father and the Son, and thus making intercession for the saints according to the will of God. What a wonderful disclosure this is of the ways of God in the Church and in the world! The beginning of those ways by means of which He is linking together, in oneness and under one Head ■ Christ ■ those things and those beings which sin had disunited from Himself and from one another. Prayer and intercession does indeed greatly glorify God; because, in attending to it and answering it, He puts forth His glorious power and wisdom. He, by such manifestations, comes forth from that light which no man can approach, and descends in tempered majesty, grace, and blessing, upon the creatures or works of His hand. To know that the desires of my heart can enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and that He will act in accordance with them, is an overwhelming thought. I feel sure ■ nay, it is sure, because it is written (Dan. 9) ■ that those saints who dwell most in the secret place of the most High abound most in intercessions. We are not heard for our much speaking. It does not require bodily exercise, which profiteth little, to accomplish this service. The heart which loves all saints in the bowels of Christ Jesus can in very few words make request with joy for all: can, through only an emotion of holy love and desire, present all before God and our Father in the name of the Lord Jesus: ■ "Father, do good unto all saints, according to thine own perfect love towards all, for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen." By this sweet lifting up and pouring out of heart, all are at once remembered, and none overlooked by us, and we and they together bound up afresh in the love of the Father and of the Son, by the Holy Ghost.

A Good Profession

Written by a servant of Christ a short time before he slept in Jesus.

I HAVE in Jesus an all-wise Head■a glorious and a tender Husband■an infallible Prophet■a merciful and faithful High Priest■a gracious King—a watchful Shepherd■a loving Friend■an everlasting Father■a Brother born for adversity■a Child born unto me■a Son given unto me, who is Himself heir of all things■the Lord of glory■the Prince of peace■the Lord my righteousness■the Holy one of Israel■the Redeemer of His people■the Saviour of sinners,■the Lord of hosts is His name■the First■born of every creature■my Life■my Light■my God■my Glory■my Shield■my Exceeding great reward■my Alpha■my Omega■my All■in■all■ALL my salvation, and ALL my desire.

Exodus 24, 25

It is deeply important to distinguish between “Law” and “Grace,” and to trace in the divine oracles the contrast between the righteous and condemning demands of the legal covenant, and the unsearchable riches and full salvation of the gospel of the grace of God. The Holy Scriptures frequently remind the believer that he is “not under the law but under grace;” and the Epistle to the Galatian saints specially warns as against the pernicious error of mixing up these things which differ, viz., the Law which was given by Moses, and the Grace and Truth that came by Jesus Christ. It is well to observe that the gospel was not designed to help, but to save those that believe; not to improve the human family in a moral and intellectual sense, but to give life and deliverance from “the wrath to come;” not to heal the unwounded who are lying in a state of contented alienation and distance from God, but to comfort the sin-stricken sinner, purge his guilty conscience, and bring him nigh, by the blood of Jesus. Man being a fallen creature, “without strength,” and “ungodly,” can render nothing to God ■ “all have sinned and come short.” Legal requirements, therefore, only expose the weakness and depravity of the sinner, and consequently make manifest his real state as “far off” from God. This unsuitableness of the Law (holy, just, and good as it is) is remarkably exhibited in these chapters in Exodus; and also the all-sufficient power of divine Grace in accomplishing for us what the Law could not do.

No sooner had the Law and Judgments been given to Israel than Moses was commanded to “come up” into the presence of God (Ex. 24:1). It was a solemn moment. It at once tested the “law of commandments.” Most carefully the legal code might be perused, and the special and minute injunctions concerning judgments be weighed, but the more diligently they were considered the clearer it must have appeared that something else was needed to bring “nigh to God.” This call of Jehovah to Moses strikingly skews that the Law, though abounding with instruction concerning outward observances, was unable, because it was weak through the flesh, to bring into God’s presence: ■ there was nothing in the whole catalog of legal requirements that could furnish men with means of “access” to God.

Moses therefore has recourse to Sacrifice ■ the blood of the slain victim is his refuge, for he rose up early in the morning, builded an altar, and sent young men to offer burnt-offerings and sacrifice peace-offerings unto the Lord, and when the blood was sprinkled, Moses went up into the Mount.

In this way the prophet could “draw nigh to God.” By the blood of the sacrifice he went at once into God’s presence; yea, when the sight of the glory was like devouring fire on the top of the Mount, Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the Mount. When the summons to “come up unto Jehovah” was announced, he was compelled to take refuge in that which was alone able to it him for the presence of the Most High. “Without shedding of blood is no remission;” therefore by the blood of the sacrifice only, was sinful flesh able to approach God and live: by the efficacy of the shed blood of Another he drew near, and was able to abide in the presence of God ■ there to enter into the counsels of God, and receive instruction and heavenly wisdom concerning the service of the God of Israel.

How truly blessed it is thus to find the glory of the Gospel shining forth, so attractively, immediately after the giving of the Law! How sweet to behold the excellence and suitability of Grace to our condition! How soul-comforting to read in types and figures the liberty which the blood of Jesus gives in the presence of God! Unbelief and carnal reason may look for creature fitness and human worthiness, but faith delights alone in the riches of divine grace, and by the blood of the Son of God enters with boldness into the holiest of all, and there abides.

Moses having thus peacefully entered into the presence of the LORD, there beholds the pattern that is to be imitated, and has minute instructions communicated to him concerning the service of the Tabernacle. If any imagine that communion with God involves nothing but personal enjoyment, let them pause and consider. Our Heavenly Father looks for fruit in the branches of the True Vine, and has so ordered, that the edification of the “whole body” of Christ, shall be by that which “every joint supplieth.” Each member, therefore, of the Church of God is so necessary, that the most feeble can never be said to be needless. To be independent of our fellow-members is to be, in measure, independent of Christ. But to return: there is the Service of God, as well as the Grace of God; and the former, when acceptable, is, I doubt not, the sure result of the latter. It is “much fruit” that glorifies our Father—not the suggestions and activities of the flesh which “profiteth nothing,” but that which is of the operation of the Spirit of God, and therefore according to His own blessed pattern. “See, said He, that thou make all things according to the pattern sheaved to thee in the Mount” (Heb. 8:5).

In the details we may notice: 1. That the service enjoined by the Lord is to be the obedience of a “willing heart”■not grudgingly, but of a ready mind; for God loveth a cheerful giver. 2. That the quality and kind of service are minutely described, each ingredient of which represents Jesus in some way or other. 3. That the Spirit of God takes up the offerings, and applies them to the service of the Tabernacle (Ex. 35:30).

We cannot suppose that any Israelite was so poor as to be unable to render something to the service of the Tabernacle■the badger’s skin, shittim wood, and goat’s hair had their places there, as well as the gold, and silver, and brass; but nothing that did not correspond to “the pattern,” however large in quantity, or wealthy the hand that brought it, could be accepted. The Spirit of God is the Glorifier of Jesus, and He only displays His power and wisdom in that which exalts Him who is the Worthy One; hence the poorest of the families of Israel, who willingly dedicated his feeble measure of oil or spice, met with a ready welcome, while the richest abundance, which accorded not with “the pattern,” would find no appointed place of service in the Tabernacle.

What practical lessons are found here, beloved! Christ “the way”■ His blood our alone ground of acceptance and fellowship■His example our only pattern■His Spirit our only power to serve Him acceptably, and the grace of God which bringeth salvation, and not the law given by Moses, the root and source of all. We may remark also here, that this service of the Tabernacle was abundantly fruitful to the servants of the Lord, for the further they advanced in the work the more the glory of the mercy-seat was known, and the more apparent it was that the Law was fulfilled, magnified, made honorable, and taken out of the way. Moses was commanded to take the two tables of testimony, on which the law of commandments was written, and put them in the Ark, above and upon which was the mercy-seat.

Lastly, we may notice, that the time came for every man's work to be made manifest■the Tabernacle was reared up, and all the accepted offerings of the people used for the glory of God, according to the wisdom and workmanship of the Holy Spirit. Nothing was then seen but what was according to "the pattern." Each minute part, as well as the whole, resembled Jesus. No result of human policy had a place there, but the poor man's piece of badger's skin filled up a place of service that gold and silver could not, while the precious stones, and most costly and rare materials had their places also.

Let us take courage, beloved! Not a cup of water, a prayer, nor a word, expended in the service of the Lord, according to Christ, shall be unnoticed in that day; while the high-flown pretensions of the unspiritual will find that the works of carnal wisdom are not accepted of the Lord. "We are not under the Law, but under Grace;" washed, justified, and sanctified in Christ, in whom we have a living and an imperishable hope. Let us then draw near by the blood of Jesus, and abide in the holiest of all. Let us attentively consider "THE PATTERN" we are called to imitate, and seek to render to Him that service which will glorify Him now, and of which He will graciously manifest His approval in that day, when He shall make up Me jewels.

Prophecy

THE Holy Scriptures abound in prophetic truth. The prophets of old, by the Spirit, testified beforehand both “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11). The error of the Jews was to separate these two things which God had joined together; ■their minds were occupied with Messiah’s coming in glory, but they overlooked the sufferings of Christ prior to that period. Many Christians in the present day are, unconsciously, in the opposite error; their souls rest in the sufferings and death of the Son of God (most blessed and most precious this is), while the “blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” have not been considered, and therefore not looked for. The consequence is, that those portions of the sacred oracles which refer to the Lord’s return and reign, the restoration of the nation of Israel, deliverance of creation, &c., are said to have need of being spiritualized,’ as it is called, in order to be rightly understood.

Let us look, for instance, at Isaiah 9:6, 7, ■ “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever.” The first part is agreed by all Christians to have a literal signification, and, to have been fulfilled in the coming of Christ in humiliation; but few will admit that the latter section is to be understood in the same simple manner, and therefore say, that the throne of David means something very different from what is expressed. Look also at Luke 1:31. ■ “Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.” This, every believer understands simply as it is written, knowing from the testimony of the word of God, that it has had its literal accomplishment. Not so however the whole of the verses which immediately follow■ “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” This, many true-hearted Christians mystify by saying, that Messiah sitting on “the throne of David, and reigning over the house of Jacob forever,” means Christ reigning spiritually in the hearts of His people now. But, I ask, where shall we stop, if such a vague and an unwarrantable method of handling the Word of God be submitted to? If it be needful to spiritualize one part of a sentence, why not the whole? Would not the foundation of every believer’s hope be shaken, if the same mode of understanding the truth of God were applied to the Gospel promises?

How, then, may be inquired, are the prophetic testimonies to be interpreted? To which we reply, Let us beware of applying human rules, and a finite understanding, to grasp the things of God. There is a beautiful simplicity in the Holy Scriptures. What we need is a child-like mind, to be kept in dependence on the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to avoid traditions of men, compare spiritual things with spiritual, prove all things by that Word which will “not pass away,” hold fast that which is good; and then we shall find ourselves taught by Him who is able to guide into all truth, and teach the deep things of God. May we have grace to search the Scriptures with reverence and godly

fear!

It is worthy of remark, how literally many of the fulfilled prophecies have had their accomplishment; and should not such a fact serve to guide those who seek to understand the Lord's mind in the prophetic testimonies that are yet future? It was foretold that, through Abraham and David, according to the flesh, Christ should come (Gen.22:18; Acts 2:30); that His mother should be a virgin (Isa. 7:14); that Bethlehem should be the place of His birth (Mic. 5:2); that He should be a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, oppressed, afflicted, and smitten (Isa. 53); that one who did eat bread with Him, should lift up his heel against Him (Psa. 41:9); that He should be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, which would be given for the potter's field (Zech. 11:13; Matt. 27:9, 10); that they would give Him gall for His meat, and in His thirst give Him vinegar to drink (Ps. 69:21); that He would be numbered with the transgressors, bare the sins of many, and make intercession for the transgressors (Is. 53), that when He was smitten His sheep would be scattered (Zech. 13:7); that His language on the cross would be, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me" (Pe. 22.); that they would pierce His hands and His feet (Psa. 22:16); that His garments would be parted, and lots cast for His vesture (Ps. 22:18); that a bone of Him should not be broken (John 19:36); that He would die for our sins, be buried, and that His soul should not be left in hell, neither His flesh see corruption (Ps. 16. Isa. 53) These, and many other Scriptures might be adduced, to show the literal fulfillment of past prophecy; while the scattered condition of the people of Israel, ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, which is still trodden down of the Gentiles, the blinded condition of the Jews as a people, &a. &c. are proofs also that prophetic Scriptures are still being literally fulfilled.

There are, at least, eight reasons for those who fear the Lord giving heed to the prophetic Scriptures.

1. Because they are the words of the living God.
2. Because ALL Scripture is profitable.... that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).
3. Because the Holy Spirit — the Glorifier of Jesus — is given to us to show us "things to come" (John 16:13); and can we suppose that He would have taken up His abode in our hearts, to guide us into a correct understanding of the mind of God, unless our Heavenly Father intended it for our blessing and His own glory? Certainly not, especially when we remember that the name of this blessed Teacher is "The Comforter."
4. Because the testimony of the apostle Peter is, that we do well to take heed to the "sure word of prophecy," as unto a light that shineth in a dark place (2 Peter 1:16-19). Because much of the personal ministry of the Lord Himself was prophetic.
6. Because prophecy formed an important feature in the ministry of the apostles.
7. Because the last book in the sacred Scriptures is peculiarly prophetic. It is a letter from the Lord Jesus to His saints some years after His ascension: it opens with the solemn announcement, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him;" and concludes with, "Behold, I come quickly." The book is introduced with, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy," &c.; and towards the end it is written, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book."
8. Because most unfulfilled prophecy is connected with the personal return and glory of Him, who is the Object of the affection and desire of the Lord's people. The first resurrection will take place when the Lord Himself descends from heaven (1 Thess. 4:16, 17); the dead, small and great, being raised a thousand years afterward, when He to whom all judgment is committed will sit upon the great

white throne (Rev. 20:5-12). When the enemies of the Lord Jesus are made His footstool, He will arise from the throne on which He is now seated, to put all foes under His feet (Heb. 10:12, 13). When the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, JESUS will be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one (Zech. 14:9).

When ungodliness is turned away from the house of Israel, it will be effected by the return of CHRIST their Deliverer (Rom. 11:26). When all kindreds of the earth wail, and the nations are angry, it will be because the great day of the wrath of the LAMB is come (Rev. 1:7, 6:16, 11:18). The joyful song of the redeemed before the throne will be, "Worthy is the Lamb;" and their never-ending delight and blessing, that they see JESUS, are with Him and like Him forever. One great purpose of God clearly is, that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. He being the Heir of all things, and Maker of all things, will be honored by all; so that every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, yea, all in them shall yet be heard, ascribing "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever" (Rev. 5).

It is one thing to receive instruction from men or books, and another to learn the truth in communion with God, through whatever instrumentality He pleases: ■ "I will instruct thee," &c. (Psa. 32:8).

Prayer.

No. 3

IN 1 Samuel 12. we also find deeply interesting instruction in relation to prayer. When Israel had chosen a king, Samuel thus addressed them: "Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which He did to you and to your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place" (1 Sam. 12:7, 8). Moses and Aaron were raised up by the Lord to redeem Israel out of Egypt, in answer to their cry. When in the land they forgot the Lord their God: "And when they forgot the Lord their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and have served Baalim and Ashteroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve Thee. And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe" (vss. 9-11). They knew not whom God would raise up to deliver them. In each case He chose His own instrument and Israel was rescued from the hand of their oppressor. Alas! how soon do we get tired of the place of dependence and of prayer, as the sequel shows. "And when ye saw that Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king" (vs. 12). How prone we are to turn away from the living God, and hew out to ourselves cisterns that can hold no water. When our faith in God fails, we recur to the arm of man and our own inventions. The setting up a king in their midst was in principle a denial of confidence in God. It showed the state of their heart. They no longer walk by faith, no longer leave it with God whom He shall send, or how deliver. Their eye is now removed from God, and is settled on Saul. "Through God we shall do valiantly," is the language of faith: better is it to walk with God through the trial, however great it may be, than to be in prosperity and ease without Him. When God is displaced, and other things have our confidence, our nakedness will appear; we are divested of our strength, and become the boast of our enemies. So it was with Israel, Saul was ever their trial, and the one who stood between them and their safety, their blessedness, and their God.

Our chapter (1 Sam. 12) closes with a blessed expression of God's unchanging love to His people, and of Samuel's purpose to pray for, and teach them the right ways of the God of Israel. "And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way" (vss. 20-23). God's grace is often most conspicuous in the midst of our departures and mistakes. Though we change, He changeth not. "The Lord will not forsake His people," is ever to faith a blessed promise. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" are the words of Jesus. He is the unfailing servant of His people, for whom He loveth He loveth

unto the end. Our souls can rest here, though utterly cast down as regards every other refuge. In the Fountain of living waters we may ever find the refreshment of our souls, and in the fullness of Jesus a supply for all our need. Would that we ever turned there, and only there!

Samuel does not excuse nor palliate the people's sin: on the contrary, he reasons with them of all the righteous acts of the Lord, while maintaining the ground on which God had set him, as their intercessor and instructor. Although Israel had deeply and grievously failed, he would still be their intercessor and instructor; simply because they were God's chosen people, whom He would never forsake for His great name's sake. "God forbid," says he, "that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way" (vs. 23). "God forbid," said Paul, "that I should glory, save in the cross." These servants of the Lord express the mind of God. To glory in anything save in the cross, or to cease to care for God's children are alike repugnant to the mind of the Spirit.

James 5:17; 1 Kings 17:1-9

LITTLE is recorded of the history of Elijah prior to his public service, beyond that he “was a man subject to his passions as we are,” and one who “prayed earnestly” (James 5:17). Whether he was rich or poor, old or young, before his life of faith, matters little: we only really begin to live when we have died unto sin, and are alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and this, too, dates the commencement of our true riches.

It is worthy of notice, that the earnest praying of this dear man of God is the first feature in his history that the blessed Spirit presents to us ■ “He prayed earnestly that it might not rain.” (James 5) He knew what secret intercourse with God was, and he was rewarded openly (Matt. 6:6). He sought the honor of God, and was honored. All Israel seemed carried away by a spirit of idolatry, and it was terrible to Elijah’s heart to see no one standing up for the truth of God. Doubtless he knew from the word of the Lord, that it was the will of God to visit such abominations with shutting the heavens that there should be no rain (Deut. 11:16, 17), therefore “he prayed earnestly” that Jehovah would interfere, make known His displeasure, and not allow the adversary to prosper, and the name of the Holy One of Israel to be so blasphemed. The prophet “prayed earnestly that it might not rain,” &c. &c., and the prayer of one man prevailed with God, and brought down His interference with the whole nation. By this secret dealing with God, Elijah was strengthened to go into the presence of the king himself, and boldly testify, in the name of the “Lord God of Israel, before whom,” said he, “I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain,” &c.

And in this solemn mission there was none with him. He had to deliver his sorrowful sentence against revolted Israel alone, in the presence of their wicked and idolatrous king: he had no human helper, no yoke-fellow to take part in his denunciation of judgment. But the word of God was his guide, the presence of the Lord his hiding-place, the joy of the Lord his strength, and the fear of the Lord his safeguard from the fear of man. Truly, he walked with God!

The man of faith and prayer, though without natural resources, must be preserved in time of famine (Psa. 37:19). “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him.” Elijah seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and food, raiment, &c are added unto him. (Matt. 6).

Make you His service your delight,

He’ll make your wants His care.

Hence we read, “The word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there” (1 Kings 17:2-4). Who would have supposed that birds of prey, unclean birds, whose natural instinct would have led them to pick out the prophet’s eyes, would be thus employed to minister to the necessities of the Lord’s servant! But so it was, and God often leads us by a way that we know not, makes darkness light before us, and crooked things straight, according to His own word.

The prophet makes no remark on this unexpected command of God: he asks no question, indulges no imaginary nor real difficulty, leans not unto his own understanding, but trusts in the living and true God to fulfill His own gracious promise; and, therefore, he goes forward. He was a man who “prayed earnestly,” and consequently was prepared unto every good work■ a vessel meet for the Master’s use. Faith is always obedient to God’s commands; it waits God’s warrant for acting, and that only. Elijah, therefore, went to the exact spot he was commanded; he “did according to the word of the Lord,” and was fed with “bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook;” thus proving, and daily experiencing, the faithfulness of Him who cannot deny Himself. Imagine for a moment the position of this dear man of God■solitary, secluded from all human associations, apparently Unoccupied, yet most truly serving the Lord with all humility of mind, enjoying communion with God, and loaded with His benefits: all this time undergoing trials of faith and patience, while witnessing the resources of the brook becoming less and less every day. The same word of the living and true God, however, that brought him there, sustained him also, and enabled him to wait with patience. It may be said of him, as it was of Abraham, “By faith he went out,” and “by faith he sojourned.” How simple and blessed is the life and walk of faith!

At length the time came when “the brook dried up.” It was a solemn moment for the prophet, all visible means of sustenance were gone, that great blessing of the Lord in the time of drought was expended; but, though the gifts of God may alter, or become exhausted, His resources fail not, His grace is as rich as ever, and His loving kindness in no measure abates. As the running brook had been a blessing, so the “dried up” brook is a blessing also, as teaching the man of God the blessedness of trusting in Jehovah under all circumstances, and of proving the inexhaustible resources of the Fountain of living waters. How needful it is on such occasions as these, when streams, that have ministered blessing, fail and dry up, and gourds of comfort and protection wither, to abide in the unchangeable, unfathomable, love of Jehovah-jireh! What else could have sustained Elijah’s soul at this time? What besides could have preserved him from taking refuge in some broken cistern or carnal stratagem? We find him quiet and unmoved until the word of Him who cared for him was heard, “Arise, get thee to Zarephath,” &c. Oh! how precious it is to trust God, who is so worthy of our confidence!

“Earthly friends may fail or leave us,

One day soothe, the next day grieve us,

But this Friend will ne’er deceive us;

O how He loves!”

The Divine purpose in sending Elijah to the brook had, doubtless, now been accomplished; the appointed lessons had there been learned; and the man of faith fitted for a higher class of instruction in the school of God. He had proved the power of earnest prayer, the blessedness of simply obeying the word of the Lord, the favor and faithfulness of God toward those who trust in Him, and therefore he was prepared for another sphere of service, and to have former lessons deepened in his soul, in circumstances where ravens had disappeared, and the brook had “dried up.”

Elijah, however, lost nothing, though the brook “dried up,” for Jehovah was his Shepherd. The solitude was exchanged for opportunities of fellowship, and the rude hiding-place of Cherith for the widow’s house of Zarephath, so that one great blessing was removed to be succeeded by many and greater; and, though it might have been unknown to the prophet at the time why he was to hide himself by the brook, he afterward found that it was God’s provision for his safety from the vengeance of Ahab, who had sought him by sending to every kingdom and nation for him. Oh how great is His goodness which He has laid up for them that fear Him, for them that trust in Him before the sons of men! Let the Lord’s tender care over His servant teach us, beloved, to “be still” in circumstances of adversity, and to trust God where we cannot see Him nor understand His way, in the blessed assurance that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Oh may I ever trust my God,

Whatever my distress,

With firm reliance in His word,

And changeless faithfulness!

Those who trust in God may be greatly tempted, and distressed, but will never be confounded.

Eph. 1:4

THERE is great comfort in the doctrine of election. It tells me that my history is a very old one. It did not begin when I believed. My faith in Christ was an event or fact far down in the course of my history. The story itself, written (wondrous to tell it!) by a divine hand, began ere worlds were framed, and covenant counsels concerning me constituted the first great fact. My foundation is there, be my faith weak or strong. Others brightly outshine me, and rapidly outrun me. I will rejoice in that, and neither envy their fruitfulness, nor be alarmed because of my comparative leanness. My origin is as divine, and venerable, and holy as theirs, and my foundation as immovable. Much more luxuriant branches may spread themselves at my side, but we have all one root. My pedigree is as high as theirs, only they are more distinguished in the family history.

There is nothing more opposed to the mind of God, than making little of His grace in Christ. The Galatians were not giving up Christ. They were only dividing their confidence between Him and other things. They were only partly surrendering Him. But how does the apostle deal with this? "Behold I, Paul, say unto you, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." And happy for us is this jealousy of the Holy Ghost, watching and surrounding, as with a wall of fire, that truth which makes the sinner happy—the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Revelation 3:18

IT is always sweet to trace the grace of our Lord Jesus in His ways with His people. The Laodicean Church had turned away from Him─they had practically eluded Him, in whom was all their blessing─ but He tarries at the door, and knocks for admission; and, with yearning of heart, proffers a word of counsel to them. The Lord loveth judgment, and would have them consider their ways; yet He forsaketh not His mints, although it may be needful that He should disown them, in a corporate capacity, as His public witness.

His appeal is very touching─His fingers drop, as it were, sweet smelling myrrh, while knocking at the door. The Laodiceans seem to have forgotten that they have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, and that except they abide in Him they cannot bring forth fruit: therefore the Lord reminds them that all true riches, wisdom, and strength, yea, all their springs are in Him whom they so slight, and who purchased the Church of God with His own blood. What tenderness, grace, wisdom, and faithful love His counsel bespeaks! It is as if He said to them, as to Israel of old, "Return unto Me, for I am married unto you."

The life proper to a believer is a life of faith: he lives "by the faith of the Son of God." Our felt need keeps us "looking unto Jesus." To suppose that we "have need of nothing" is to cease to live by faith. Peter did not cry out, "Lord, save me!" until he was "beginning to sink"─his need compelled him to seek Jesus (Matt. 14:30). Self-complacency, indolence, barrenness, and ignorance abound when the believer does not "walk in the light, as He is in the light," in humble dependence upon the grace of God. When circumstances, service, or anything else is sought after to satisfy the heart, the grace of God is lost sight of, and a low and unhealthy condition of soul is the sure result. Laodicean circumstances were prosperous─ "I am rich, and increased with goods;" but their spiritual state was "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," and they knew it not. Words of solemn import to us, beloved!

But there is restoring grace in Jesus as well as life giving grace─yea, all spiritual blessings. He counsels them to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire," that they may be rich. Corruptible gold can only be rightly estimated by comparing it with that which rust doth not corrupt. Incorruptible blessings are to be had elusively of Him "who only hath immortality." The common temptation presented to a declining saint is to recover himself by redoubling his diligence in outward service, but the counsel of the Lord is to come at once to the only source of blessing─ "Buy of Me," said He, though you are wretched, and miserable, and poor; come, "buy of Me," without money, and without price. Nothing is more important, when we discover that we have failed, than at once taking refuge at the throne of grace, remembering our compassionate and pitiful High Priest─our all-prevailing Advocate. No increase of effort to serve can procure the restoring grace needed; but "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all righteousness;" or, though particular sins may not be laid on the conscience, the sense of a withered and barren state of soul should lead us to Him for refreshment, and new supplies of comfort and strength. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth

strength." May we never forget the loving counsel of Jesus; and may it be ours, beloved, to respond to these gracious words, "Buy of ME gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." He loves us to have true riches, but He well knows that every other refuge but Himself is deceitful, and that he who drinketh other than "living water" will only "thirst again."

I presume that earnest prayer, self-judgment, confession, searching the Holy Scriptures, in dependence on the teaching of the Spirit, assembling together in the name of Jesus, seeking the Lord, waiting on Him, feeding upon His flesh and blood, &c. will characterize the conduct of those who buy of HIM "gold tried in the fire." The meditations of the heart will be on "that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us," ■ the glory and beauty of the "Lamb without spot," ■ the undefiled purity of the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow, ■ the immaculate perfectness of the "Holy Child" whom angels worshipped, ■ the exhaustless riches of Him who is full of Grace and Truth, ■ the unfailing sympathy of the "Brother born for adversity," ■ the amazing meekness and lowliness of the "Man of sorrows," ■ the unutterable sufferings of the sinner's Friend, ■ the scorn, mocking, and crucifixion of "the Lord of glory," and the forsaking of JEHOVAH, who made His soul an offering for sin, and brought Him into the dust of death, ■ the Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep, ■ His death, ■ burial, ■ His triumphant resurrection by the glory of the Father, ■ His exaltation far above all heavens, ■ His expected return, and other scriptural thoughts and views of the person, grace, work, offices, &c. of the Lord Jesus Christ, will characterize the heart exercises of those who buy of Him "gold tried in the fire." How poor are they whose riches are all corruptible and pass away! What true riches, what an inexhaustible, unchanging, and eternal treasure we have in Christ Jesus! How strange that we should ever seek gladness or gratification in aught but Him! Our present joy, certainly, is to know Him, our eternal blessing to be with Him, and like Him, forever.

But the Lord Jesus may be the Object of our affection, truly so, and yet our walk come short of that which characterizes discipleship; and this will be, except we are enabled, by faith, to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" ■ to realize our standing in Him, who is at the right hand of God ■ to appropriate God's righteousness as ours. Hence the Lord also counsels the church at Laodicea to buy of Him "white raiment," that the shame of their nakedness might not appear. That every believer has the righteousness of God the ■ "white raiment" ■ imputed to Him, is very clear; but it is quite another thing to live in the power of it ■ practically to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this important truth that seems to me to be taught here, and so needful to be apprehended, in order to walk as faithful witnesses of Jesus, and to be preserved from the shame of manifested nakedness. If this blessed grace in which we stand be lost sight of, carnal confidence and self-esteem will be more or less nurtured, and an unspiritual walk result. The only preservative against this is the "white raiment" (and we cannot be said to be happy in our souls, or safe as to our steps without it): "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). In the Lord we have righteousness and strength. When abiding in Jesus, we "bear fruit;" severed from Him, we "can do nothing" ■ the shame of our nakedness appears. It is marvelous how liable we are to slide away from the apprehension of our standing in Christ, and to lean upon an arm of flesh. Those only will maintain a calm, even, godly step, who appreciate their standing and portion in Christ risen. There may, hover, be much zeal and stir in service, but the resources being carnal, the fruits will be of an unspiritual quality, and not for the glory of God: the shame of our nakedness will assuredly appear, if the "white raiment" be

not appropriated. It is no marvel then that Luke warmth, poverty, and unhappiness of spirit should abound, when the soul refuses to give heed to that blessed relation of the grace of God which imputes "righteousness without works." It cannot be otherwise, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. The heart, however, that with fervor receives, and abides in this rich grace wherein we stand, can rejoice in hope of the glory of God■can afford to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and knows it to be no vain thing to suffer for His sake. Oh, to be kept abiding and walking in Him!

Perhaps there is nothing we so tenaciously hold as our own wisdom. Our sinful experience, and the condemnation of conscience, compel us to take refuge in the Saviour, and our daily sense of failure may be enough to constrain us to confess, "behold I am vile!" but to continually allow that we have no ability to perceive anything aright, but by the power of God, involves no little self-renunciation. One may say, that it is a more difficult thing to cease from our own wisdom, than to cease from our own righteousness. Job acknowledged he was vile, before he was brought to the confession that he had darkened counsel by words without knowledge, and uttered things that he understood not. Be this, however, as it may, it is clear that blindness had taken possession of the Church at Laodicea, because they lacked the "eye salve" which Jesus only can supply. If the heart be not in communion with God, there is no ability to see anything clearly either in ourselves or others. The Laodiceans were blind, and knew it not; they thought they had "need of nothing." Self-confidence and spiritual darkness are generally associated together. We have need to extract the beam from our own eye, to be able to "see clearly" to take the mote out of our brother's eye. The Lord counselled the Laodicean saints to buy of Him "eye-salve" that they might see. In proportion as we cease from our own wisdom, we are willing to be taught of God; we presume not to understand the deep things of God but by His Spirit; and when pondering His word, the earnest cry of our souls is, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!"

Well may we say,

'We have found a friend in Jesus.

There is no position, or circumstance, a child of God may be in, but His grace, wisdom, and power can meet■no difficulty from which He is unable to deliver, no wound that He is not all-sufficient to bind up and heal. Blessed it is for us when the Lord is the object of our affection, the spring of our joy, our treasure, our righteousness, our wisdom and our strength. May the Churches, now, have ears to hear what the Spirit saith!

Prayer.

No. 4

IN the previous papers, we have seen, in the history of Moses and Samuel, how greatly they helped the children of Israel by their prayers. In the wilderness and in the land they were saved by intercession. Moses and Aaron were raised up by God to be Israel's saviours in answer to their cry, and Aaron's life was preserved because of the prayer of Moses. Saul being allowed to become the head of the tribes was the result of their unbelieving cry, and came as a judgment upon them ■ "He gave them a king in His anger," &c. These examples of godly supplication shine on the face of scripture, and serve as so many beacon-lights to assure us, that no matter how dark the hour, or dangerous the path, there is a way for us to a place of safety and of refuge; that the mercy-seat of our God is ever for us, and His ear ever open to our cry. We may justly inquire, What may we not expect in answer to prayer? Is not God now as willing, and as able, to accomplish our deliverance, though great be our fall, or heavy our oppression? Alas! we have not, because we ask not. How often has God to say of us as of Israel, "They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds; they assemble themselves for corn and wine" (Hos. 7:14). It is often beyond our power either by word or act to help a brother; but such instances are not beyond the reach of prayer. When Abraham could do nothing to effect Lot's rescue from Sodom, "he gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord... And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt" (Gen. 19:27, 29). Sweet it is to be such helpers of the brethren. The prayer of Jesus saved Peter from being sifted as wheat. Some say that they have not time for prayer, as though many words formally offered up were needed. David's prayer as he ascended the Mount of Olivet was a short one: "And David said, O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." Here were a few words from a broken heart ■ the cry of faith, in the midst of a company, which was speedily answered. We are not heard for our much speaking; our best prayers are often those we find the least complacency in ■ groanings which cannot be uttered. We should not be discouraged though the answer come not at once; it may be delayed until after we have entered our rest. Solomon's prayer in 2 Chron. 6 still speaketh, and shall yet be answered on Israel's behalf. We know not how much blessing we daily reap, as the harvest of many a cry sown in tears, long ago, by departed saints. Prayer is the utterance of the heart, the pulse of life, of the man who walks with God: he does everything by prayer ■ he prays and faints not. I pass over many remarkable instances of prayer in the Old Testament, suggesting the few that are mentioned as leading ones. Elias was a man "subject to like passions as we are," is a remarkable notice of the Spirit's, to encourage us to pray while conscious of unworthiness.

Our Lord is the great example of prayer, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard in that He feared" (Heb. 5:7). Previously to His going into the towns to preach, He had been with His Father in prayer. "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Ere He appointed His

twelve apostles, He “continued all night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12). Ere He came to Calvary, His soul passed, in the garden of Gethsemane, through all the exceeding sorrow of the dark scene that lay before Him, and, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly. Having received His answer, and being strengthened, He boldly went forth and overcame. His prayer in the 17th John, like’ Solomon’s, still shines in the presence of God, and shall also, in due time, have its answer. It has been said that our Lord ever prayed alone: He loved the mountain top, and the desert place■elevation and solitude marked His private way. His prayers were too deep, too vast for any to enter into. Public prayer is the Church’s duty and privilege: it is happy to meet with two or three; but there is no substitute for, and nothing like private prayer. Our words to God need not then measured care, so that others may understand. In secret we move amidst the depths■the privacies of our own wants and experiences, which we feel are all known to God ere we utter them. Within our shut door we can pour forth our unhindered streams of intercession. Prayer is the secret power of the man of God, the stay of his soul, his refuge in every time of need. While engaged in prayer, he dismisses the darkest cloud, and rises above his most potent enemy. In the distance, he sees gathering, not the danger that he had dreamed of, but the blessings of heaven ready to descend. The scoffer may say, what is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto Him? The child of God having the faith and Spirit of Jesus can reply, “As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice” (Ps. 55:16, 17).

Scripture Knowledge

Reminiscences of a Public Meeting in June, 1829.

WHAT is the value of Scripture knowledge? Just in the measure that God's mind is believingly discovered, so do we enjoy blessing. It is only in Scripture that His mind is revealed—His mind in Christ.

There is not a single word more nor less than we need in that blessed book.

As we believingly understand the Scriptures aright, so do we become fruitful, and so do we become conformed to Christ.

He is a wise believer who is brought into subjection to the testimony of God.

The true character of everything is given in this blessed book; moreover, there is an intrinsic value in the Scriptures to strengthen the renewed mind.

The Word of God is a powerful lever in the hands of the Holy Spirit to raise us up above the flesh, and above this present evil world.

Abstraction with heavenly things, communion with God—the blessed results of meditating on His Word—enable us “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

Any person of moderate understanding may get a knowledge of other books, or of science, but not so with this book of God: all natural understanding, as natural understanding, is useless.

The Spirit of God works in the heart through the Word; in this way we get present power and joy.

Ignorance of God, in the natural man, is the barrier of separation from God; ignorance of the mind of God in saints, separates and unsettles them, hence differences of judgment, and denominations.

We have a Word which is very pure, very plain. God has given us this Word, and He has given us an unction from the Holy One. There is no obscurity in the word, except that which is caused by the flesh; let us bring our minds into subjection to the truth, so shall we be brought into union with each other. How may we discern between that which is of the Spirit's teaching and mere intellectual attainment?

In entering upon the study of Scripture, we must enter upon it in a spirit of dependence and prayer, not leaning to our own understanding. When we read the word of God intellectually, we shall not be really strengthened, nor comforted; we shall find no joy, nor will any real service to God be the result; but when we are taught by the Spirit, we have something to stand by us in the hour of temptation; something which will afford us comfort, and by which we shall be enabled to meet the difficulties and annoyances of every-day life.

That which we learn from the Spirit will endure, whilst that which comes through the natural intellect will be soon dissipated and pass away.

When we find we have occasion to stop during the reading of the Word, and to say, "I must learn, and ask of my Father," so do we study in the right way. To set about making progress with the natural mind is not the way to bring our souls to God. We require a spirit of self-renunciation, and dependence on the teaching of the blessed Spirit.

Take for instance the passage, "All things work together for good to them that love God;" if my natural understanding merely take in this great truth, it will afford me no comfort in trial; whereas, if I have been taught it by the Holy Spirit, when I come to be tried, I prove and know, that all things do so work-together for my good, and this affords me solid comfort and peace in affliction and trial. It is important to advance in the knowledge of God's truth, but it is more important to have that which we already know deepened in our souls.

The Moral Power of the World to Come

I HAVE specially taken pleasure of late in considering the moral happiness of heaven, or of the millennium. For what a relief it must be, to be free of the selfishness and pride which so spoil the pleasures of the heart now, and of many and many a working of our impure and perverted nature! And Scripture, more largely than we may suppose, gives us witnesses and samples of millennial or heavenly enjoyments.

We know that great physical power or virtue will attend the coming kingdom of Christ. Then, as prophets sing, “the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose”■the lame shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing■the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid. Nature, in all its order, shall own the presence of the Lord. The floods shall lift up their voice; the trees of the wood shall rejoice before Him. As creation has already felt the bondage of corruption, it shall then feel the liberty of the glory.

It will be like the awakening of latent sensibilities, like the sweeping of an exquisite instrument by the touch of a master-hand. For it is the same creation, the same vegetable and animal world still, but under new authority. Let the sons of God be manifested in their glory, let the Lord’s holy mountain be established, and His knowledge cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and then the whole system, as thus pictured by the prophets, shall spring forth into new conditions. And so, in man, when the powers of that coming age take him for their subject. Let but the glory appear, let but the passage be made from “this present evil world” into “the world to come,” and new principles will rise at once to gild the scene, and give to all personal and social life its richest enjoyments; that is, its moral enjoyments.

This will be the sweeping with perfect skill an instrument of still finer workmanship. For there are, in the renewed mind, latent qualities of admirable texture and beauty. In its present conditions it has to struggle with nature, and to suffer sore left and hindrance from the flesh. It is oppressed and encumbered by a gross atmosphere which ever surrounds it. But it has qualities inlaid in it of admirable excellence. It has capabilities of acting, judging, and feeling, of the highest order; partaking as we know, of “the divine nature.” And let but the due power reach it and move it, and all these latent sensibilities and faculties will be awakened. Let but the presence of Christ address itself to the renewed mind brought into the liberty of the kingdom, and forms of moral beauty in purity and benevolence, throughout all personal and social life, will be blessedly unfolded. It will not be another creation, but the same “new creature,” in other conditions; all its powers and affections finding their exercise in their native air, and under their proper and undisturbed influences.

Scripture, as I have observed, more largely than we may suppose, gives us the witnesses of this character of the virtues and enjoyments of the kingdom. Some of them I will now look at shortly.

In Gen. 21 the father of Israel and the Gentile are seen together, for a mystic moment, as Israel and the nations will be in the days of the kingdom. All is peace and good will between them.

Questions which before had divided them, are now settled. The ways of their hearts in themselves and towards each other, are all right. No grudging here, no provoking there. All pure social affections and principles adorn the scene of their intercourse. Abraham's grove makes the desert to blossom, and his altar makes the earth a sanctuary, but his way with Abimelech, and Abimelech's with him, witness the presence and power of right moral principles, and pure social affections, giving the moment its highest character and richest enjoyment.

But how had it been with Abraham and Abimelech before? what was the moral of the scene when last they met? I need not speak of it. The preceding chapter, as we know, tells us. But what a change! The very same men are here before us, the Abimelech and the Abraham of chapters 20. But what a change! How blessed to think of it! No trespass now of defiling lusts, no practicing the skill of a guileful heart. The scene is morally new, though the materials are the same; because, in principle, there has been a passage out of "this present evil world" into "the world to come."

And so, between Isaac and another Abimelech. It is of one character with this. And therefore, I need not further notice it, than as being another happy witness of the moral virtue that there will be in millennial days, when the atmosphere will be cleared of its noxious humors, which row so dim and taint the whole social system. (Gen. 26)

The 18th chapter of Exodus presents a kindred occasion. The whole family in heaven and on earth are there seen, holding high and holy communion, and nothing of nature soils it. Jethro acts the part of the heavenly visitor, Moses that of the head and representative of the earthly people; and the people themselves are there, waiting upon him in full subjection, to "inquire of God," and know "the judgment of God," in their matters. All is happy from the highest to the lowest, throughout this mystic millennial heaven and earth: all is full of moral beauty and order. And only remember of what materials such a lovely scene is formed. The last time that Moses and Zipporah were together, they parted as in a rage■ the last time the people are seen and heard, it was murmuring again and again at the ways of the Lord, one after another (Ex. 4:15-17). The same Moses, the same Zipporah, the same people, but, morally, how different! The people inquire and obey, instead of murmuring; and Zipporah's offense with her "bloody husband" ends in her bringing back her children to greet and rejoice with her lord!

Is there to be, in those coming days, a transfiguration? and in the heavenly places, is that which is now natural to be spiritual, and the corruptible to be raised in glory? and is there to be then, in the earthly places, the leopard dwelling with the kid, and the child playing with the hole of the asp? And are such prospects bright and animating? And shall these moral transfigurations be less so? Is it not deeply cheering to our spirits, that such an air as this shall be breathed, when once "the mount of God" is reached? Clouds and vapors gather over the road to it, where now we travel, but the sunshine of purity and love gilds the hill itself forever and ever.

But again■that generation in Israel, which lived in the closing days of David, and in the opening days of Solomon, gives us another witness and sample of the same mystery.

As David was ending his reign, the people carry themselves very badly. Absalom had stolen their hearts from his father, and Sheba the son of Bichri had headed them against his king. And at the very end, Adonijah makes a party for himself out of them. The whole moral state, with the exception of a remnant, is forbidding indeed. But millennial days were at hand. The scepter of the

king of glory waves across the scene, and there is virtue in it, strange and precious virtue. Confusion and enmities cease. Roots of bitterness are extracted from the soil. The people are happy in each other's happiness. Instead of Judah and Israel numbering each other to the sword, "Judah and Israel are many, as the sands on the sea shore, eating, drinking, and making merry. Instead of going again to the wood of Ephraim to battle, they sit down under the vines and fig-trees calling each other their neighbor, and none making them afraid. The sword is turned into the ploughshare, I may say, in more senses than one. (2 Sam. 15; 1 Kings 4)

What comfort is there in all this! Pass but the confines of the two worlds, leave man's day for the Lord's day, and all this moral renovation, with its thousand springs and streams of social happiness, will be known even in the place where pride and selfishness now spoil, or at least depreciate, all the pleasures of our hearts.

And again, in the mouth of another witness the same joy is proved to us. The sight we get of "the holy mount" tells the same wondrous happy tale. There the kingdom shines before us, in its heavenly and earthly places. We see the possession of glory in some, and the vision of it only in others. But no grudging, no provoking, attends this. Peter utters the moral power of such a moment as this; for all with him is gladness and benevolence, satisfaction and unselfishness. And yet who was this Peter? The man who shortly before, as at the foot of that hill, had been an offense to the Lord, resisting that very truth which the heavenly strangers, who now so ravish him, talk about; savoring then of the things "of men," but now so richly of those that be "of God."

And yet, all this exquisite moral change in Peter does not bespeak him so much, as the place he was in. He wist not what he said. All that, however, makes it only the more blessed to us. For it is the presence of Christ that forms him, and fills him, making him thus the necessary witness of its benevolence and joy. And, I ask, if the possession of glory, or even the vision of glory, be thus to be desired, what says the heart to this prospect of being freed of its selfishness, breathing elements which gender love and purity like this? Surely we are now harassed by our corruptions, and again and again discouraged and depressed by the low condition of the saints, the contrary courses into which changeful tempers and passions are urging us, with jealousies that daily arise, heart-burnings, debates, whisperings. But all this is to end. All this shall yield to the authority of all personal and social virtues, as soon as "the mountain of the Lord's house is established." For "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim."

It is this one feature, common to each of these sales of millennial days, that has at this time particularly attracted me. In each of these scenes and illustrations, there was so much of the working of perverted nature just before, but immediately on reaching the place of the power of the day of the Lord, the purest and happiest principles and affections adorn and animate everything.

Such is the moral power of "the world to come," or is it, if we would rather that it were so expressed. 'Tis but a little while, and thus shall it be. And happy to apply all this to our own history. The very same brethren who now so often grieve one another, will ere long be sharers, yea, helpers, of each other's joy.

Heb. 12:9

Amy from busy care and strife,
Let me pursue my simple life,
Thy holy will, O God, be mine,
Perfect alone, because divine!
Then all shall be my gain.|Ps. 37.

Ps. 52:2.

Song of Solomon 1:7, 8.

Ps. 40; Heb. &c.

Matthew 4:10. &c.

Rom 8:98.|

Murmur and discontent, away,
I would begin a brighter day;
No more my path I wish to choose,
What to desire or to refuse,
But self in Thee to lose.|Philippians 2:14; 4:5.

1 Cor. 10:10.

Song of Solomon 2:10-13.

Ps. 47:4.

Isaiah 26:13.

Isaiah 30:21.

Isaiah 56:10.

Isaiah 58:16,19.

Romans 6:16.

Ps. 32:8.|

Like pliant clay I would to Thee
In thought and every action be:

“Thy will be done,” my heart doth say,
As on I journey, day by day,
Across the desert way.|Jer. 18; Is. 64:8
Matt. 6:10.
Deu. 32:10|
To live for others, O my God
Yes, ‘twas the path that Jesus trod;
But best of all to live for Thee!
May this my highest honor be,
This service sweet and free.|Acts 10:38, &c.
John 4:34; 8:36.
John 15:8.
Rom. 1:14.
Rom. 6:22
1 Cor. 7:22.
1 Cor. 9:19
Galatians 5:13.
|
The spirit quiet, gentle, meek,
My longing soul doth daily seek,
And always in Thy sight to live;
‘Tis this my Father loves to give,
‘Tis this I now would crave.|Ps. 149:4.
Proverbs 16:19; Is. 53:7.
Matt. 5:5: 2 Timothy 2:34
1 Peter 3:4
Gen. 5:22, 24; 17:1.
Gen. 48:15.
1 Kings 2:4 &c.

Ps. 18:31, &c.

Ps. 5.|

Though sin and nature will oppose,
Though many be my mighty foes;
The broken, contrite heart, O Lord,
To fear Thy name, to love Thy word,
Thou wilt to me afford.

|Galatians 5:17.

Eph. 6:12, Rom. 8:38.

Ps. 51:10, 17; Is. 66:2.

Heb. 12:28; 1 Peter 1:17.

&c.

Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15. Ps. 119.

Ps. 149:4.|

Then praise or blame shall equal be,
No tongue of slander troubles me,
If God and Christ my ways approve:

My life is in that perfect love,

Which comes from Heaven above!|Ps. 119. 165, margin

Pro. 3:23-26.

Pro. 22:4.

1 Peter 2:21-23

1 Peter 3:13-17.

Pro. 16:7.

Pro. 29:23, 25.

Rom. 8:31.|

The references (though only a few bearing upon the subject are given) should be read.

Matthew 6:19-34; Luke 12:15-34

[Please to read these Scriptures, before you read what your brother desires to say on them.]

HERE our blessed God and Father speaks to us His dear children, by His Son, concerning our present creature necessities. For though we are now new creatures in Christ Jesus, and children and heirs of God, yet we are still creatures according to the first creation, and have our creature wants.

With what authority, and love, and wisdom, does our Father here speak to us of these matters. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." "Behold the fowls of the air...Consider the lilies of the field." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Is it not plain that our heavenly Father would take on Himself the care of our creature necessities, and have us care for His Kingdom and His righteousness? He would have our hearts fixed on the things that are pure, and purifying, and eternal things suited to our high and holy calling as new creatures, and as His beloved children and heirs.

Oh! how blessed to have my Father's kingdom, where His children shall shine as the sun, ever before me; and to be seeking to walk now "as in the day" as an obedient child, hungry and thirsting after that righteousness which pleases and honors Him. As the blessed First-born said, "I do always those things that please Him!" To have ever in the heart that prayer "Our Father; who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name: Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven!" Then the pilgrim-child will add "Give us this day our daily bread!" For this very asking our Father for each day's supply, tells that we really feel the care of these our needs is with Him. And He delights to be inquired of, to do it for us.

How opposite is all this to the anxious, covetous, world around, out of which His grace has brought us. The Gentiles seek after these earthly things. They are the objects for which they live. They are without God! They walk by sparks of their own kindling! To us the word is "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." "But ye have not so learned Christ."

He tells us to trust our Father with all these matters, to be subject to Him about them for He knows them all, and will not forget to consider and care for them all, though this will be in His own way; and He calls us into fellowship with Himself in His own purposes and counsels, for His own glory by Christ Jesus our Lord.

How blessed is this, beloved in the Lord! How sweet to know that He who spreads open before us His own kingdom of holiness, and peace, and glory, is watching our pilgrim-needs He who feeds

the fowls, and clothes the lilies of the field!

Let this mind be in us, beloved! Let us press along the line for the prim of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Never let us fall under those searching, melting words, in verse 18 and 19 of Phil. 3 to be wept over as those “who mind earthly things.” Rather let us follow him who could say, “This one thing I do,” (vs. 13,) and, “My God shall supply all your need.”

And He does! He cannot fail. See the lilies. See the birds. See all who trust in Him according to His Word.

But there is divine wisdom, as well as holiness and love, in this plan of our blessed Father’s. He would exercise faith, and weaken sense. He would draw out love, and dry up selfishness. He would increase prayer, and silence murmurings. He would cultivate obedience, and mortify self-will. In a word, He would make us like Jesus, and unlike the Gentiles.

Let us admire and ponder His wisdom who thus gives us a pure, unmingled, ever-blessed object, and takes the mixed and complicated one into His own hands. For how are fleshly-lusts and creature-needs confused and mingled together! Food, drink, clothing, a dwelling, furniture, are needs. But the fallen creature has made all these objects for its lusts. Now none but God can supply the needs and teach us to mortify the lusts, and when we seek our supplies at His hand, and wholly according to His will, we shall find Him so dealing with us as both to supply our necessities and to famish our lusts. And as faith worketh by love, so when He bestows more than our own needs require, we feel that we are stewards of His bounty, and we are “ready to distribute.” Yet in this distribution we shall remember still that needs, not lusts, are to be cared for (2 Cor. 8:20, 21).

Now, are we willing, beloved, to put these matters into our Father’s hands? Are we willing to learn of Jesus concerning them? To say not our will, but Thine be done? Or do we wish some indulgence “a little one,” in food in clothing in our houses; for our children? If so, we cannot have it of our Father, except it be in judgment. For He may give us our lust, that so we may learn that “he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

There is one indeed ever waiting on us to serve, not our needs, but our lusts. There is a shepherd for the flesh an “idol shepherd” who has “the world” as his storehouse! But shall we traffic with him; or be fed at his hand?

Is it not through our natural necessities that that old serpent, the devil, constantly entices us to paths of self-will, and worldly policy? Let but self-will be set at work in the provision for our real wants, and self-will will soon over step that boundary, and be making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof! All the enemy wants is to get self-will into action. Let him only succeed in this and his victory is won. It may be about real, and even pressing needs and the way to meet them may be so ready, so easy, so close at hand. And if the heart be not upward waiting for the Father’s word weighing the suggested plan, or step, in His presence-we shall surely be ensnared. “He that believeth shall not make haste.” “They waited not for His counsel.”

See the “Beloved Son” in the wilderness. What was the enemy’s first temptation? Was it not to an independent exercise of His own powers, to provide for His pressing bodily need? But, no! He could hunger, but He could not act without His Father’s word! That word He loved more than His

necessary food! He waited only on God! Powers He indeed had■but He would use them only in subjection to His Father! This, beloved, is the excellency of all the excellencies of Jesus. He was obedient! Obedient not unto hunger only, but unto death, even the death of the cross!

Oh! for that Spirit which makes us “of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord!” This is the Spirit of Christ Jesus■the well-beloved Son.

Self-will in the provision for our necessities is then the first snare of our enemy, beloved. Then will follow self-will in the provision for our lusts. And then the tempter spreads the world and its glory before us■a wide field indeed! They only consult to cast us down from our excellency■they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly (Psa. 62. read it throughout). For, is not our excellency to wait only upon God?

Beloved, let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. For our enemy will approach us through very fair and loving instruments. The partner of our bosom, the child of our body, the friend of our youth■the amiable, the moral, the prudent, the wise■may all be used by him. Necessity, duty, advantage, example, the sanction of many a good name, will all be urged, and dark pictures will be drawn of the consequences of refusal. But, “My soul, wait thou only upon God!” “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

Even those who are one with us in Christ may not clearly see the Father’s will, and the Beloved Son’s example in this matter, and may even help the enemy; but let us, in childlike meekness and faith, be subject only to God. “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

And in a day of such lawlessness as this, when men, (and, alas! the Church too!) are gone so far into the way of their own heart, what would more surely mark out a “peculiar people” than this simple subjection to the Lord, and prayerful dependence on Him, in all our pilgrim-needs. We should, then, be content with such things as we have; knowing that He has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. We should be “without carefulness.” We should not be choked with the cares of this life. Casting aside every weight-instead of multiplying them by unbelieving self-will■we should run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, and, like Him, our hearts would be filled with the joy set before us. The kingdom which cannot be moved■our Father’s kingdom■would be ever before us, and in us; and we should hasten forward to the day of God!

True, our God and Father may exercise our faith and patience. He may keep us waiting for His word, and His supply. And this will give the enemy a time and a place for his acts and his instruments. But His end in this is that patience may have her perfect work■that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. That we may wait, and pray, and watch, and fight, and overcome. That we may grow from “little children” to “young men:” those who are strong, and who have the word of God abiding in us, and who have overcome the wicked one (1 John 2).

Oh! to what rich account may these creature-needs be turned, if only we will listen to our Father’s counsel about them; and sit at the feet, and follow the steps of Jesus, whom He has sent to teach us in His ways!

Let us ponder, then, these precious Scriptures, beloved in Christ. Let us pray to our Father that they may do their proper work in our hearts. And to Him shall be the glory, by Christ Jesus, forever

and ever. Amen!

Christian Fellowship

REDEMPTION is the basis of all spiritual fellowship. As made nigh by the blood of Christ, and partakers of the Holy Ghost, we can enter into the holiest of all, and think, and act, according to God.

There can be no “communion” between a believer and an unbeliever. To be without Christ is to be alienated from’ God.

Fellowship implies partnership or equality; also mutual agreement. The Great Shepherd of the sheep was the “Fellow” of the Lord of Hosts; and Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.”

It is needful to know “that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,” to have fellowship with God, or fellowship with those who are begotten of Him. The Apostle wrote about “the Word of Life” which he had seen and handled, that those he addressed might have fellowship with him; for, said he, “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

True Christian fellowship is the mutual exercise of faith and love of those who have fellowship with the Father, resulting from a common life in Christ, a common union to Christ, a common standing in Christ, as fellow-heirs and fellow-citizens, and a common relationship to God and to one another. The circle, therefore, is large enough to embrace all who have “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ;” and such fellowship should be sought (1 John 1:3): anything short of this cannot strictly be termed Christian fellowship. As “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” we worship and serve together, and sympathize with one another, being members of “one body,” and having one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:4-6).

In the blessed Lord we see unbroken fellowship with God. He obeyed His Father’s commandments, and abode in His love. He set Jehovah always before Him; and prior to choosing His apostles, the transfiguration, &c. &c., we find Him in a mountain, or in a solitary place, a whole night in prayer. We have recorded, also, touching instances of His desire that His disciples should have fellowship with Him; and in this, as in everything else, He hath left us an example, that we should follow His steps. “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you” (John 15:15): and again, “What! could ye not watch with Me one hour?” It is precious also to see the Lord washing His disciples’ feet, that they might have “part” with Him; for, said He to Peter, “If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me” (John 13:8). Peter’s fellowship with Jesus would be hindered, if defilement of the feet were allowed: the Lord, however, knew the blessedness of fellowship, and stooped to wash His people’s feet to secure it to them; and the same Spirit animated His beloved servant afterward, as we see in the let Epistle of John:■ “These things write I unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.” How important it is to seek our brethren’s “fellowship with us,” because “our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus

Christ!"

Much is recorded in the holy Scriptures on the importance of Christian fellowship. The injunction not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but to exhort one another, stands remarkably at the head of the mention of most fearful apostasy; and follows the glorious announcement of "boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus." (Heb. 10) The pride and selfishness of the human heart is sometimes, however, even among Christians, displayed in the selection of a solitary path, in which they keep both their adversities and comforts to themselves: but Luke warmness and spiritual poverty commonly result ■ "How can one be warm alone?" (Eccl. 4:11.) The sorrow, also, of such a path is often keenly felt, and is sometimes very perceptible to others ■ "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." And falls, such must expect, for the Spirit of grace and truth having bound us together in "the bundle of life," made us members of the "one body," and therefore fellow-members gifted to edify one another, it is evident that to choose a path of independence of our brethren, is really to manifest independence of Christ. Happy those who in all things consult Him who is the Counsellor, and who often teaches us through our fellow members: ■ "Where no counsel is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

It was this momentous subject that seemed specially to occupy the Lord just before His crucifixion. He commanded the disciples to love one another as He had loved them (John 13:34); and His prayer to the Father was most affecting on this point ■ "That they ALL may be ONE; as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). After this, we see the presence and power of the Holy Ghost making the Church of God at Jerusalem so truly of one heart and of one soul, that no man called anything that he possessed his own, and multitudes believed that Jesus came out from God. How unselfish, how gracious, how opposite to the habits, pursuits, and thoughts of men is this heavenly unity! Believers were one in heart, and soul, and substance, because they were one in Christ. And I ask, Is there anything on earth so precious to God as this? Is not the fellowship of saints the great gospel testimony to the world? (John rill. 35.) Well might the sweet psalmist of Israel exclaim, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! "Good and pleasant indeed have we found a taste of it now and then, and often have we also proved the verity of another Scripture, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward, of their labor, for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" (Eccl. 4:9, 10).

May we, beloved, increasingly aim after personal fellowship with God, and more and more cultivate fellowship with our brethren, feeling how necessary every member of Christ is to us, and that "the body" is edified by that which "every joint supplieth."

The Church

To have been ignorant of prophecy in the days of Luther, would have been, comparatively, of small moment; for the Spirit of God was leading men's minds into other truths of vital importance, and there was, so to speak, little leisure for any subject, except to clear away to the groundwork of justification by faith. But with this fundamental point settled, to be ignorant of such truths now, argues an indifference to the purposes of God concerning Christ and His glory■limits our acquirements to but a small portion of the Word of God, that, namely, concerning the way to be saved■and deprives us of much practical truth both for walk and testimony, just at the time, it may be, when a fresh development of His counsels concerning this world is on the eve of taking place; for we must ever remember that God in government is one thing, and God in relation to the soul is another; although the two, as in all the things of God, have their links of connection, and although Christ be the agent of both.

Yet the study of prophecy, particularly in its earlier stages, is by no means difficult. We soon find ourselves upon ground common to the great body of enquirers■such as the premillennial advent, the restoration of the Jews, and the first resurrection. It is a subject of thankfulness that even thus far so many are agreed. The possession of these elementary truths is of much advantage in practical service to the Lord; for it helps to quicken our energies in respect of a certain defined hope, and to deliver us from false expectations concerning the operations of the Spirit of God during the time in which we now live.

The next branch of the prophetic inquiry embraces such questions as the state of the professing Church (baptized Christendom) when Christ comes; together with corresponding ones as to the condition in which the Jews, whether in or out of their land, will be found when that great event takes place. What might be termed the third branch, is the investigation of the, as yet, unfulfilled last week of the seventy weeks of Daniel, and the specialty of the Anti-Christ's dealings, whether with Jew or Gentile, at that period. With this question is closely allied that of the critical fulfillment, in a period of literal days, of some principal portions of the book of Revelation, and the characteristics of a body of suffering people, found in the trials of the latter day, and delivered, by the destruction of their enemies, at the Lord's own appearing. This last branch of the inquiry demands a tolerably enlarged and accurate acquaintance with the Word, into which, it may safely be affirmed, many do not give themselves the trouble to enter.

Those who do, are inevitably led, by certain difficulties which present themselves on the threshold, into an examination of what the Church is, and what place it holds in the counsels of God, touching His purposes, whether present or future, in the divine government of the world.

It is in order to help the enquirer to clear up such difficulties that the following remarks are made.

Supposing, then, we have arrived at the conclusion that■according to 1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Tim. 3:1-8; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12.■the professing Church, in the last days, is to be very corrupt, and that according to Romans 11:20-22, its sentence is to be cut off, because it does

not stand by faith; in other words, that the mercy of God shown to the Gentiles ends in their apostacy; and also, that the restored, but not converted Jews receive, according to Daniel 9:27, and John 5:43, a false Messiah, and that there are those among them (Dan. 11:30) who forsake the Holy covenant, it yet remains true that in either case, whether Jewish or Gentile, there is a godly seed who have to do with the Lord in the midst of the apostacy, and who lean on His promises (compare for the Jews Daniel 11:32-35; and for the Gentiles 2 Thessalonians 1:4-8; 2 Peter 2:1-9; 3:10-12). The general principle in either case is, that the Lord's people are a suffering people, up to the time of the manifestation of the Lord on their behalf.

Now, whilst, as before implied, we arrive within a certain distance of the latter-day crisis with tolerable unanimity; it is just within this distance—within a small circumference—that events occur which become important for testimony, in proportion to the nearness of their approach. One of these questions is the action of the Spirit of God upon the godly Jew or Jewish remnant of the latter day, concerning his proper earthly hope; viz., of being blessed in earthly things in the land of Judea; and another intimately allied with the former is, whether the Church is to be in the tribulation of Anti-Christ, and not rather relieved by being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, previous to His revelation for the destruction of that Wicked one (2 Them. 2:8). Into the first of these, viz. the Jewish hope of an earthly inheritance, it is not our purpose to enter at large; as to the other, it is evident we determine nothing by the fact of both the Jew and the Church being a suffering people to the last; unless it can be shown that each party suffers with a distinct hope of its own; and we believe the solution will be found, not so much in a minute and make-weight adjustment of texts, as in the study, from the writings of Paul of what the Church of God really is; and thus we shall be able to discover, by its well-known features, where it does appear and where it does not.

The Church, in the writings of the Apostle Paul, is a new thing—something specific. It is united to a risen Head, who is called the Head of the Church, as the beginning, the first-born from the dead (Col. 1:18); quickened by the same power which quickened Him (Eph. 1); called into His fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9); built up to its full stature, as a body down here, by an especial ministry given from the ascended Jesus; and presented thus complete, at a certain epoch, as a glorious Church, to stand in the ages to come as a monument of the exceeding riches of His grace. It is a something of itself—a prolonging, speaking with reverence, of Christ personal—indeed, in 1 Corinthians 12:12, it is so called. Tracing in the Epistle to the Ephesians its history and character rather more minutely, we find it in chapter 1. energized by the same power which raised up Christ from the dead, and called “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all,” —Christ in ascension being its Head, and the power in exercise towards it being then first set forth (compare 2 Cor. 1:9, 10). In chapter 2 it is said to be raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ (vs. 6); and to lose down here both a Jewish and Gentile character in the flesh (vv. 11, 14). chapter 3 is a treatise on the mystery, in other ages not made known unto the sons of men, of the Gentiles being joint heirs, and of the same body, of which Paul was made a minister, to preach among them, the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, with a prayer for Christ to dwell in their hearts by faith, compare Colossians 1:26, 27 — “Christ in you the hope of glory.” Observe—there was a prophecy in the Old Testament, that the Jews should be angered by a foolish nation during the time of their rejection of the Messiah (Deut. 32:21), as well as of the Gentiles being blessed in millennial times through the Jews (Amos 9:11, 12); but there was no idea of an heirship, or of Christ having a body during His

rejection, in which He should dwell as the hope of glory; nor, indeed, is it even named with reference to the time of His proper Lordship in the millennium. The particularity of the Church consists in its being heir at once of Christ's sufferings and glory, in consequence of its being identified with Him in His rejection and resurrection. In chapter 4 the apostle speaks of the body of Christ down here as ministered to by gifts flowing from Christ ascended, "till we all come.... unto a perfect man." This chapter extinguishes the notion of the Church in a disembodied state, being ever in the apostle's mind, (as is commonly said of a deceased Christian, 'Such an one is gone to make part of the Church above,') for the idea is the completion of the Church as a body down here; and then (chs. 5), when thus complete, its presentation as a glorious Church—the union of the husband and wife being but a type of the great mystery—Christ and the Church. As to its blessing, already it is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and raised up and made to sit there in Him. The office of the Spirit of God is to draw its affections now towards Christ in the heavenlies, much more will its place be there hereafter. It is unearthly both in its present character and future hopes. Christ is preparing mansions for us in His Father's house, and will come again and receive us unto Himself; and its birth, separation, building up, completion, and resurrection are all by the One Spirit. The work must be finished with the Church, before, speaking reverently, the Spirit of God enters into another sphere of action.

Finally, it is important to recognize the cry put into the hearts of Christians, that is of the Church, during persecution. It is after the pattern of their Master "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," who, "when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously." They have no right to expect deliverance in any public way that is, by any public manifestation on their behalf. True, indeed, the hand of the Lord may be seen in answer to prayer, and for the carrying on of His own purposes, as in the case of Peter and others; such deliverance, however, is not final, but for further suffering; and, peradventure, for martyrdom at the end, for the object of the Lord is not the saving of the flesh, but resurrection; and so we are "strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;" and, when at last He comes for them, they are not crying for vengeance, but preparing for the marriage of the Lamb, in watching and keeping their garments. All this will be seen to be important when we contrast it with the Jewish cry.

Let us now turn to the blessings promised to the literal seed of Abraham. The Jew as such, ever was, and ever will be, for the earth. Palestine (under enlarged limits to those which they have ever yet possessed Gen. 15:18) is theirs forever (Gen. 13:15; Ex. 32:13). They have never yet had it under the New Covenant nor with the true David as their Messiah. They have hitherto been a rebellious race, although with an elect seed among them. It is clear, from Zechariah 8:2, 8, that there are yet mercies intended for Jerusalem—mercies which cannot, by any stretch, of figure, be entirely spiritualized. From the same prophet we learn that these mercies are to be preceded by local judgments (12. & 14:1, 2, 3). It is also plain, from Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, that during this time Anti-Christ — or, at all events, some wicked prince—will set up the abomination of desolation there, on which occasion (Matt. 24 15:16) the disciples of Christ are desired to flee. It is evident then, that disciples are in Jerusalem at the time. The inquiry, therefore, may be made, who are these persons? If they are Christians, it is certain that the Jewish temple has been rebuilt, and that Jewish worship is restored— "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place."

Considering the character and condition of the Church of Christ, as portrayed in the Epistle to the Ephesians, we may well ask, how is it possible that Christiana can have to do with the acknowledgment of the Jewish temple, whilst Jesus in the heavenlies and the heavenly Jerusalem claim their allegiance and influence their hopes? But next, why should we find them in Jerusalem at all in such numbers that a commandment should be given them to flee? And again, is fleeing from trouble on earth, when resurrection is our final place, characteristic of the Church? Certainly, one would suppose, that persons told to flee at the very crisis of danger and subsequent judgment, are destined to fulfill some purpose on earth. If then we believe that Palestine belongs to the Jews, that they will return there in unbelief, receive the Anti-Christ, and make a covenant with him to their eventual judgment—that amidst the general apostacy there exists a godly seed among them, who are to be spared in the judgement as the nucleus of the future regenerate nation; we may readily conceive how appropriate are such directions for their conduct, whenever the awful crisis shall arrive. In the book of Psalms, too, there is continual allusion to these latter-day desolations of Jerusalem, annexed to which are petitions for deliverance, with vengeance denounced upon their persecutors. (Consult such Psalms as 44. 46. 48. 74. 76. 79. &c.) Such a cry is unsuitable to the Church, whose expectation being heavenly, knows its place, and looks not for deliverance or settlement on earth. Thus we see the importance of distinguishing between the operations of the Spirit at this present time, for “there is one body and one Spirit,” and His operations at the time, when He puts a cry into that godly seed, who are intended for earthly blessing—a cry, we say, for final vengeance against their enemies; and this is surely the way in which many of the denunciatory Psalms are to be understood. Now this understanding of what the Church is, has, among others, two very useful results.

1st. Whatever be our opinion of the coming of the Lord for the Church (1 Thim 4:18-17), as distinct from the Church’s coming with Him (Rev. 19:11-14; Zech. 14:5) ■ and we wish to make every allowance for the difficulties of the question we are enabled to discern the distinctness of the Lord’s dealings with the Church and with the Jew, as well as the difference which exists between their character and standing. Otherwise, in the examination of the crisis of the latter day, we shall have no distinguishing feature to enable us to separate the one from the other, and shall be groping our way amid scenes of sorrow, with no certainty as to who the actors are.

2nd. It brings us into acquaintance with our position of separation down here. It is something of itself ■ unique. Godliness with us should not be the learning of a few maxims, by the which we are to get on safely in the world, as, alas! is too often all that is made of Christ. A little acquaintance with Him will do this. But the knowledge that Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church, produces a voluntary resignation of things around us, for the better hope. We are mourning for One who is away, and whom we are expecting to return. We are not like David, a ruler and a saint at the same time ■ the one calling being at variance with the other; but our calling down here is according to our saint ship. Oh! that we had more of these holy affections, and more sense of the honor put upon us, as called to fellowship with Christ’s sufferings and rejection.

Resurrection Life

I FEEL more and more the blessedness of resurrection-life: the calm, quiet peace to be enjoyed in the life of Christ, which is deaf and blind to the influences of worldly principles and allurements, has its ear bored willingly to the door of the Lord God Almighty, and the eye filled with the bright countenance and majesty of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, the beauty of Jehovah's holiness. Between the world and those who have risen with Christ there is a great gulf, where lieth the dead flesh and bones of the Adam-life, which hath died upon the cross of Christ once, and dieth no more, but is by faith to be reckoned dead; while, like Israel upon the off-shore from Egypt, we rejoice as risen from the flood, beneath whose waters our flesh, with its Egypt tyrants, lie dead; and, in the power of our third-day's journey, we can walk with God in a new life; and wait, in dependence on Him alone, for a safe conduct to our inheritance incorruptible, that fadeth not away.

1 Kings 17

THERE is something very blessed in the Lord's first word to Elijah after the brook had dried up ■ "Arise." It shows us, that in the sharp trial of faith the prophet was undergoing, he was enabled to "let patience have her perfect work." No efforts of the flesh, no plans or schemes of the intellect, no struggles of self-will appear in action; but all is quiet, and intimates a prostrate and humble condition of soul. The prophet is "still," knowing that it is the faithful Jehovah-jireh he serves, and in whom he trusts. And he does not wait upon the Lord in vain. When the brook had actually "dried up," and the hour of his necessity had arrived, then "the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (1 King; 17:8, 9). What lessons are here, beloved! Do they not afresh stir us up to "wait only upon God," whatever be our difficulties, and howsoever hopeless, humanly speaking, the aspect of things may be? According to sight and sense, things were daily more hopeless ■ the brook became less and less, while drought, and famine, and distress were on every side. He had no human resources, no visible friends, no brethren at hand to have fellowship and sympathy with him; but he proved that God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ■ that God is love; and that He who tries faith for our profit and His own glory, has His set time also for deliverance. And it was so. The great blessings at Cherith were exchanged for greater blessings at the widow's house. The prophet "arose and went to Zarephath." In the obedience of faith he simply did what God told him, and as we saw on a former occasion, no carnal reasonings, no murmuring expressions, no unbelieving interrogations escape his lips, because the man of faith is satisfied with the word of God only.

Let none of us, however, suppose, that when deliverance from trouble is wrought for us, it in the least implies that other trials are not near at hand; for God tries and proves His people (Psa. 66:10). From the word of the Lord that came unto him, this dear man of God could not naturally have conjectured there was anything but an easy path before him ■ the widow had been commanded to sustain him. But no sooner had he accosted her at the gate of the city, than he found her heart was full of unbelief in the matter, and instead of a comforting and sympathizing helper, her weakness and lack of confidence in God, called for the prophet's support and succor. It did not stumble the man of faith to see the widow gathering sticks; but sensible that he had the unfailing authority of the living and true God, he at once called her to fetch him a little water in a vessel, and bring him a morsel of bread in her hand. But she said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die" (vss. 11,12). This was a heart-searching moment for the Lord's prophet; a sudden and unexpected trial of faith; an emergency he could not have calculated on, further than, like another in after days, he might have said, "In every city bonds and afflictions abide me" (Acts 20:23). The enemy might possibly have suggested that there was no help for him in God; and surely, if he had judged from appearances, he must have been overwhelmed with perplexity and despair. But still, whatever the aspect of things may be, faith relies on the faithful promise-making, promise-keeping God. The

prophet, therefore, is still with God. He reaps the fruit of trust in God on former occasions. His acquaintance with God at Cherith fitted him for this remarkable emergency at Zarephath. He therefore counts upon God, who had never failed him; knowing that He who had cared for him so faithfully, so wonderfully, at the brook, could also, spite of circumstances, supply all his need, in any path or place to which His own word directed him. Though the widow, believe not, yet Jehovah abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself. Further, the prophet had a distinct promise that he should be sustained by the widow in that city ■ “Behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” This was enough for Elijah. He well knew, that even if the store of meal and oil did not increase and abound, they could not be entirely exhausted, because of the word of the faithful and unchangeable Jehovah. Happy those who can thus rest in the word of God in circumstances of apparent failure! Elijah therefore said unto her, “Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus with the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth” (vss. 13, 14).

How important that, as believers, we should manifest that the Living God is our refuge and strength! His own word then will be our shield and buckler. It was not any peculiar feeling or sensation that animated the prophet thus to quench the fiery dart of unbelief, presented unconsciously by this honored widow. No; but it was a measure of the same spirit that so perfectly shone forth in the ways of our all-glorious Jesus, when He fervently and successfully repelled the tempter’s suggestions with “It is written.” It is well to notice here, not only the firmness and decision which the word of the Lord gives to the man of faith, but that his sole ground of confidence is what God hath said.

And shall we not further learn in these precious lessons of grace and truth, that if we would comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and edify our brethren, we should draw our resources for such blessed service from the divine treasury ■ the infallible word of God ■ as here presented to us? “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel.” We may remark here, that it was not the narration of the letter of the word, but the prophet’s faith in God by that word, which was made such an uncommon blessing to this widow woman. He again honored God, and God honored him. To the woman, the word was with power; she heard the word of the Lord God of Israel, “and she went and did according to the word of Elijah; and she, and he, and her house did eat many days.” They trusted in the Lord and were not confounded; another witness to us, that “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him;” “The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke by Elijah” (5:15, 16).

What do our hearth say, beloved, to these things Is there not much deeply important and practical instruction for us in this simple narrative? Surely we will not unbelievably give place to the too common thought, that we are not to expect marvelous help from God in our day. No, dear brethren, shall we not rather say, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Yea, and that, even touching the things of this present life; seeing the infallible word of the Lord God of Israel and our Father is, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). And again, “My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

Happy and honored household indeed was this elect family at Zarephath, whose abode for “many days” was the scene of blessing and refreshment of spirit! The miraculous supply of the barrel and cruse was the continual witness to their consciences of the faithfulness of their God, and read to their souls many a precious lesson of grace and truth, so that faith had opportunity for growth, and their spirits a season of comfort and repose.

But the earth is not the resting-place of the household of faith. All things seen and temporal, with their fading and changeable propensities, tend to discompose the soul, and to sever the dearest attachments; yea, everything but our eternal portion and relationships. Sickness, and that of a very sore kind, even unto death, intruded into this peaceful circle—the widow’s only son suffered and pined, “till there was no breath left in him.” This proved a sharp trial of their faith. The natural feelings of this bereaved widow sadly overwhelmed her spiritual judgment and faith, and she suspected and accused Elijah of being the slayer of her son; while a breach of fellowship was implied in her exclamation, “What have I to do with thee?” This was a terrible condition of things, and leads us almost to fear that she must have been going on these “many days” more with the tide of circumstances than with God. We know how possible this is. Elijah, however, is upheld: he seeks not to justify himself, or to explain matters. His mind is occupied with the sorrow of the woman and the glory of God, rather than with self-vindication, which he well knew would beguile him from the path of faith. He knew God would justify him. His place of service clearly was to seek the restoration of the elect widow, and leave his own matter with the faithful Lord God of Israel. Happy would it be for us, beloved, if we were thus to act in the family circle! Happy, indeed, to be thus occupied with the glory of God and the welfare of others, in the blessed confidence that it is our privilege to cast ALL our care upon Him, who careth for us.

How well worthy of our imitation, in the spirit of Christ, is this behavior of the prophet! “Give me thy son,” said he, to the distressed mother; and the sequel tells us that he made her sorrow his own, and that, too, in secret before the Lord. He carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed, and cried unto the Lord HIS God on behalf of this sorrowing parent. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived, and the prophet delivered him to his mother, saying, “See, thy son liveth!”

What reproof and also comfort were thus ministered to this failing widow. In the school of affliction she learns the twofold lesson, that God raiseth the dead, and that it is God that justifieth. Elijah was acquainted with this lesson, and therefore makes Him his refuge, and finds blessing and joy in so doing! yea, the sorrow and trial only become opportunities for proving, and tasting afresh, the faithful love of God. The woman, in the bitterness of her grief, turned her eyes inward and around! to her sins and her circumstances; hence resulted evil imaginations and fleshly expressions. The man of faith made God his refuge, cast all care upon Him, called upon his God, whose love and never-failing faithfulness he had so often proved, and found peace, blessing, renewal of strength, and the honor that cometh from God only; so that, unsolicited in any way, the widow acknowledged her fault, justified Elijah, and owned him to be a faithful servant and messenger of the Lord. “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth” (vs. 24).

This was indeed a blessed triumph of faith. Would that we knew more of such victory in our heaven-ward journey, beloved! Elijah trusted in God, walked with God, held forth the word of God,

took refuge in God, sought not his own reputation but the glory of God; and was therefore used for abundant blessing: and there is a greater than Elijah here!

May we judge ourselves, dear brethren, about these things, that we may be vessels meet for the Master's use. Amen.

Fear Him ye saints, and then ye shall have nothing else to fear!

Prayer.

No. 5

IMMEDIATELY after the ascent of our blessed Lord, we find the Apostles giving themselves to prayer. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, &c." (Acts 1:14.) Like their blessed Master—our example in every good thing—in the time of their distress they poured forth their united prayers and supplications unto Him who was able to deliver them. Bereft of their Head, left in the midst of His murderers and opposers, where else could they turn for shelter and for help? "They were all with one accord in one place," when the Holy Ghost descended upon them. "And they were all FILLED with the Holy Ghost." Blessed answer! Wondrous fruit of intercession! They prayed and waited for that which their Lord had promised, and in due time it came. It is pleasant to dwell on this first prayer-meeting within the walls of Jerusalem, after the ascent of Jesus; and to trace from that upper-room, the fruit of intercession which was soon to spread abroad in every place. This is God's first seal to, and witness of the value of prayer, after He had taken up His Son, ■ the dawn of that blessing which was to cover the heavens with exceeding brightness. Ere He blesses, He will send us to our knees to plead with Him for the performance of His promises. He will have our souls in a state of dependence, hope, and expectancy, and thus find us ready for the fruitful shower.

The spirit of prayer is a remarkable characteristic in the Acts of the Apostles. We read (ch. 4:31), "And when they prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." What a glorious scene was this! What an unmistakable proof of God's delight in prayer! How calculated to stir up faith, to warm cold hearts, and invigorate drooping spirits! The apostles relied on this heavenly armor ■ they had tried it, and found its value. They said to the multitude of the disciples, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). Peter's prayer raised up Dorcas from the dead; he prayed alone according to the proportion of his faith, and Dorcas was restored to life. (Acts 9) How deeply interesting is the divine narrative respecting Cornelius: we are told that he "prayed to God alway." While engaged in prayer he sees a vision, by which he is directed to send for Peter. The angel of God informs him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa." On the morrow, as the Centurion's messengers drew nigh the city, "Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour;" and, while thus engaged, he also saw a vision, which opened to him the matter about Cornelius. (See Acts 10) How truly surprising is all this! Ere salvation comes to Cornelius by the mouth of Peter, and ere Peter is sent on the divine embassy, both are previously led by the Spirit to the place of intercession. What greater witness could God give of the value He sets upon prayer than this? or of the abundant answer that might be expected? The gospel came to Israel from that upper room in Jerusalem; and from the house-top in Joppa to the Gentiles. When Peter was Herod's prisoner, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him," and Peter was released by the miraculous hand of an angel ■ God's answer to prayer. Trial may come, that prayer may follow; when it has done its perfect work, the blessing flows.

Surely more on prayer need not be said: its importance is taught and relied on by all the apostolic writings. The prayers of saints, Paul every where seeks for, while he seems to be always on his knees. Thus does all scripture testify, that the man whom God is blessing, and will bless, is emphatically a man of prayer. Whether David, or Daniel, Moses, Elias, or any other man of God that might be named, they owed their blessedness, first to the riches of the grace that saved them, and then the measure of their subsequent blessing depended much on their prayers, their walk, their faith. "What meanest thou, O Sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not"■was the urgent appeal of heathens to Jonah, whilst slumbering in the boat in the hour of danger. Have not these words a force of powerful application to the Church in these days? The absence of prayer shows a torpid state of soul, that portends surrounding and increasing ruin. It declares also the absence of vitality-of a heart that cares for the Church of God and the souls of men; where prayer abounds, it is like the small cloud in the days of Elias, that promises abundance of rain.

The New Song

ALL is mischief and disturbance in the scene around■but all is ripening that revolted and apostate material, through the judgment of which the Lord is to take the kingdom. “The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved, He uttered His voice, the earth melted.”

It is as Conqueror the Lord is to take His kingdom by-and-bye, or enter His second sabbath. Of old, the sabbath was the rest of one who had labored; but the coming sabbath will be the rest of one who has fought a fight, and won the day. This “rest that remaineth” will, therefore, be entered by a rougher and more difficult path than the former; for it is to be reached through the afflictions and conflicts which sin has occasioned, and through the judgment of iniquity.

The Lord God of old entered His rest or sabbath as Creator: He had gone through the work of six days, and on the seventh He rested, and was refreshed.

This sabbath, we know, has been disturbed and lost through man’s sin. But we also know of a coming sabbath, “a rest that remaineth,” as we read.

We might ask, then, in what character will it be entered, or by whom? And all scripture replies by conquerors.

David making way for Solomon is the type of this. Solomon was the peaceful: a name which implies not abstract or mere rest, but rest after conflict or war. It bespeaks triumphant rest—something more than cessation of labor. So the Lord enters the kingdom as “the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle,” as one fresh in victory, “with dyed garments.” (See Psalms 24, 46, 47, 93; Isaiah 9, 63; Revelation 19)

Christ as conqueror is, however, known in different scenes and seasons, and in different forms and manners, before He enters the kingdom.

As soon as He gave up the ghost, the victory of His death was owned in heaven, earth, and hell; for the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the rocks were split, and the graves were broken up. (Matt. 27)

As He entered the heavens, He was received and sat down as Conqueror. He was at once acknowledged there as fresh from His conflict here. As the One who had overcome, He sat down with the Father upon His throne.

When His saints rise to meet Him they will, in their own persons, display His victory■the victory He has achieved for them. Their ascending and responsive shout will utter it■ “Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15).

In these different seasons and forms, the triumph of Christ is celebrated before He enters the kingdom: and animating and happy truth this is, Jesus ascended on high as a Conqueror; but never till Jesus ascended had heaven known a conqueror. A distant report of His victory had reached it, I may say, when the temple-vail was rent; but never had heaven been the place of a

conqueror till the Lord returned there. The Lord God in His glories had been there—the Lord God as Creator and Ruler also; and the angels that excel in strength had waited there! Some who kept not their first estate there may have been cast down, and others have sung when the foundations of the earth were laid; but never had the presence of a conqueror adorned and gladdened it till Jesus ascended. But then it was so: He had then overthrown him that had the power of death; He had led captivity captive; He had made a show of principalities; He had overcome the world; He had, as the true Samson, borne the hostile gates to the top of the hill; the grave-clothes had been left in the empty sepulcher, as the spoils of war and trophies of conquest—and thus as Conqueror Jesus ascended. Heaven had already known the living God, but never till then the living God in victory; and our ascension after Him will only, in other terms, tell of triumph, and be another display of an host of conquerors.

Then, at the end, when the kingdom is entered, it will be entered (as we have already said) by conquerors after a day of battle and war, and the vengeance of wrongs on the head of enemies.

Now, according to all this is, I believe, the “New Song,” of which we read in scripture. For the songs there are conquerors’ songs, and they are so many rehearsals, so to speak, of the kingdom’s song. Such was that of Moses and the congregation on the banks of the Red Sea; such was Deborah’s; such were the utterances, if they may be called songs, of Hannah and of Mary; and such is to be the song of Rev. 15. in its season—the harpers in heaven standing then in victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.

This gives a new theme for singing or gladness—and hence the “New Song.” The old song, sung by the morning stars over the foundations of the earth, was not a conqueror’s song—a song celebrating a divine victory, either for the redemption or avenging God’s chosen. There was no theme of victory then, for no battle had been fought and won. But sin, since then, has entered: a great counterforce has been in action, and the Lord has had to go forth, and is still to go forth, as a “Man of war” —the God of battles. And therefore at the end, a “New Song”—a song with a new theme or burthen—must be awakened to celebrate Him in this new action or character of glory. The song of Moses was a conqueror’s song, and so the song of the Lamb, “O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.” The song over creation must give place in compass and melody to the song over the triumphs of Jesus.

What new honors, we may adoringly and thankfully say, are preparing for Him through our history, and what new joys for heaven! For His victories have been for us, accomplishing our deliverance and vindication in the face of our enemies. The glory of those victories is His, the fruit of them ours.

And it is a joyous thought that the Lord is to enter His coming kingdom as a Conqueror, taking the throne of Solomon the Peaceful after the wars and victories of David. But this joy implies previous scenes of a tremendous character. Triumph, of itself, is a bright idea; but it is full of recollections of fields of battle, and scenes of bloodshed. And so with Jesus: the joy of seeing Him in triumph, and the power of His kingdom, is bright and gladdening—but the “winepress” has first to be “trodden.”

And still more—though that is solemn—the treading of the winepress, or the execution of divine judgment, speaks of previous corruption, or of the ripening of the vine of the earth. If the Lord in judgment have to tread the winepress, the winepress has previously to be filled.

And where are we at this moment standing? Not in the actual possession of the immoveable kingdom■not in the sight of the triumph that is to usher it forth, or in the audience of the New Song which is to accompany that triumph■not in the vision of the field of Bozrah and the garments dyed with blood, the day of the divine judgment which leads to the triumph■but in a certain stage of the ripening of the vine of Sodom, which is soon to be cast into the winepress, or to meet the judgment of the Lord.

There we stand: and the moment is solemn. Every day, like the heat of summer, is but maturing and mellowing the grapes of gall, or the clusters of Gomorrah. Our prospects are thus strange■awful and glorious beyond thought. We look for the increasing growth of evil, for the winepress of the wrath of God to receive and judge it, and then for the triumph and the kingdom of Jesus. For such things we look, as far as our eye is turned to the earth; but “we stand at the head of two ways.” Enoch stood there before: he looked down the way of the earth, and there he saw the maturing of ungodliness, and the Lord with ten thousand of His saints coming to execute judgment; but he himself was borne upward, the way of the heavens (Jude 14; Heb. 11:5).

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