

CRUMBS FOR THE LORD'S LITTLE ONES VOLUME 3

by H.H. Snell

A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones Volume 3, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

52 Chapters

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Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones Volume 3

Crumbs, &C.: The Perfect Law of Liberty

IT is in the slain Lamb of God alone that the awakened soul finds peace; because that Sacrifice speaks of forgiveness of sins and eternal redemption, and manifests also the blessed truth, that that veil which separated between God and His people, is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and has brought the mercy-seat into full view.

The finished work of Jesus is the perpetual consolation of God's elect. They find liberty in nothing else; and the liberty proclaimed in that "one Offering which was once offered" is full and complete. It is a freedom made by the Son of God Himself, and therefore connected with infinite and everlasting results; a freedom, originating in the will and pleasure of God according to His eternal counsel and purpose, flowing forth, when the fullness of time came, in the free gift of His only begotten Son; a freedom secured by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and given freely, without money and without price, to them that believe—even to as many as the Lord our God shall call. The work of Christ makes sure our freedom from the law of sin and death, and our liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; it bears witness to our deliverance from the power of darkness, and translation into, the kingdom of God's dear Son, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

More happy, but not more secure,

The souls of the blessed in heaven.

The various attributes of God shine forth with divine lustre and glory in the finished work of Jesus, and the everlasting salvation therein wrought for us, is most truly "the perfect law of liberty." It is perfect and everlasting love displayed in bringing many sons to glory—in perfecting for ever them that are sanctified; so that the believing soul exclaims, when estimating, by the Spirit's teaching, this eternal redemption, "As for God, His way is perfect." Infinite holiness is here exhibited, as well as unfathomable love; truth and righteousness, as well as mercy and peace; the sternest justice, as well as the richest grace; the most consummate skill and wisdom, as well as the deepest humility and self-abasement; infinite hatred and unsparing judgment of sin, as well as the tenderest compassion toward the sinner; the holiness of the law confirmed, as well as its curse borne and abolished. In short, look where we may in the accomplished work of the Mediator of the new covenant, either God-ward or to us-ward, perfection is written on it all. The Majesty on high discharged every vial of wrath the sins of His people merited, and yet found a savor of rest in the Offering. The believer is set free from every bond, delivered from the wrath to come, and made meet for the presence of God. The Lord Jesus glorified God, and saved the lost; and so infinitely efficacious was the value of His work, that "after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins for ever, He sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." (Heb. x. 12, 13.)

Blessed liberty, beloved! blessed to look into, but more blessed to continue therein. It is on such ground that our souls can triumphantly join in the Apostle's challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to

the charge of God's elect?" What blessed freedom! every enemy put to flight, every chain that bound us to the guilt and pleasure of sin snapped asunder, God well pleased, atonement made, the Redeemer raised from the dead, and most justly exalted far above all heavens, and His people saved. Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ! How happy it is thus to know God, and to walk in liberty—to rest in His love; but only let a thought of creature-sufficiency find a place in our hearts, or an effort to make our salvation more secure be indulged, and immediately we cease to look into, and as a necessary result slide away from, "the perfect law of liberty." It was so with the Galatian saints, and many else have bitterly proved it. We stand by faith, and are exhorted to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and not again be entangled with the yoke of bondage. It is a liberty unknown elsewhere, inviting us even in our most falling condition, to come boldly to the throne of grace, to confess our sins, obtain mercy, find grace to help, and to be filled with joy and peace.

What gratitude and praise then become us who have been called into such a glorious liberty! Surely, He hath brought us up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, set our feet upon a rock, established our goings, and put a new song into our mouth, even praise unto our God. His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory. How well then doth it become us to listen to His voice, who hath thus made us to lie down in green pastures, and is leading us beside still waters. With what pleasure and resignation should we seek to do and suffer all His holy will concerning us; for it must be for blessing, yea, present blessing, and will be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at His appearing.

It is but a "little while," beloved, and we shall see Him face to face. This "perfect law of liberty" will then be most truly realized, and these glorious truths, now so feebly apprehended by us, will be known in full, unmixed, and perpetual enjoyment. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Let us then go forward and upward, leaning upon our Beloved, in the confidence of His perfect and unchangeable love, seeking to give Him joy, and looking for the grace that is to be brought unto us at His appearing.

Piping and Dancing

See GEN. 32

IT is a blessed thing, not only to be obedient to precept, and watchful against evil, but to have the heart so answerable to the appeal of God, as to catch the tone of it, and reflect the very complexion of His dealing with us. Blessed, when we dance to His piping, and lament to His mourning. For this is service in spirit, and not merely with the hand or the foot.

Jacob, for instance, failed in this service in spirit, in this answer of the heart to the tone of God's appeal at Mahanaim. It was a great moment; the occasion was a very fine one. Angelic hosts were sent to salute the anointed heir of the Lord on his return to his promised inheritance. Heaven was giving a witness that it shared in the joy of such a moment, and watched with the interests of this elect one. Nothing, therefore, but an exulting spirit of confidence and praise befitted such a moment: so distinguished an occasion should have been answered by a shout of triumph in the soul. The Lord was piping, and Jacob should have danced; but he did not: his soul was not up to the occasion. He used it as though the Lord were mourning to him. He begins to fear Esau, and to pray about danger, instead of answering the salutation of the hosts of God, by going onward in a spirit of victory and joy.

We all, alas! behave too much in this way of Jacob, in the answer we make to the appeal of God in the Gospel: for it is blessed. The delight which God takes in the work of Christ for us sinners is finely expressed through Scripture, as I may incidentally notice. Prov. 8:30, 31, lets us know that this delight filled the divine mind before the world began. For Wisdom, or Christ, was then set up in connection with sinners, or the children of men, and He was God's "delight." So Gen. 8:21 tells us of the same delight in early patriarchal days. For it was the blood or sacrifice of Christ, preached by Noah, which drew forth this fervent utterance from the heart of the Lord God. Lev. 9:23, 24; Ex. 11:34; 2 Chron. 7:1 publish the same on different occasions during the time of Israel.

Because, the fire from heaven, and the glory (symbols of the divine approval and presence) in their action on these occasions, declare their delight in such occasions. And what were those events, (the raising of the Tabernacle, the building of the Temple, and the consecration of the Priest,) but so many typical exhibitions of Christ in His ways for us?

Matt. 3:17 witnesses the same in Gospel times. Christ was just going forth, the minister of grace, in works and services for poor sinners; and the Father, with the richest emphasis, seals His whole soul's delight in such a moment.

Matt. 27:51 is a like testimony. Christ had now finished the work which, at the time of the preceding scriptures, He was beginning; and this rending of the veil, without a moment's delay, speaks the delight and fervency with which all heaven greeted the work finished for sinners.

Such are among the witnesses to the delight which the blessed God takes in the Gospel, or the work of Christ for sinners. Such is the "piping;" and "dancing," or joy, and a spirit of liberty and

praise, is our proper answer to it. As when the glory and the fire appeared, in Lev. 9, the congregation fell on their faces, and shouted.

And in that case of Jacob, I may observe, that he was brought to a better mind. With his condition of soul, already noticed, the Lord had a controversy. In the Divine ear there was discord. Piping had been answered by lamentation. The Lord, therefore, wrestles with him, contends with him, rebukes him; and Jacob is put into another state of mind.

This happy process begins at once. Jacob does not faint under the rebuke: he holds the Wrestler of the night fast. The Divine Stranger then tries his faith by withering the hollow of his thigh by a touch: Jacob still holds on, "faint yet pursuing." Then the Wrestler tries his faith again, asking for liberty to go, sheaving that He was ready to put an end to the strife: Jacob will not hear of that; he acts in the understanding of this secret—that our blessing is God's purpose. He therefore makes his profit, rather than the Stranger's pleasure, his rule, and refuses to let Him go till He blest him.

O happy understanding of the heart of Christ! This was "dancing," indeed, in the spirit of his mind. All is harmony now. The "piping" has got its due answer; and Christ blesses him, instead of wrestling with him; and Jacob pursues his way in the light of the face of the Lord. He crosses the plain, calling it Peniel, "the face of God;" glorying in that mystery, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Was not that dancing? Was not that journeying with so light and triumphant a heart, as suited the piping of the Lord in the angelic salutation? All is harmony now, where all before had been discord. The exercise of soul under the wrestling had rejected everything, The fearless footstep of the patriarch over Peniel was the due responsive dance to the music at Mahanaim.

This discipline or wrestling had not to correct or change the path which Jacob was treading. He pursues it still—the very same path which he had trod before; but it had to correct the spirit in which it was pursued. "The Father of spirits" is our disciplining God.

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SELF-JUDGMENT.—How necessary it is for each of us to have much personal dealing with God, to keep out the flesh in its various insidious ways of approval to the hidden man of the heart. There would then be less running after men, less judging of others, less chattering and seeing others' failings, and more judging of ourselves; and our souls and consciences would be kept more alive, and thus we should be able to pray for those who labor and rule, strengthen their hands, and walk in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Those who labor and rule, too, should be watching, if they who rule well are to be counted worthy of double honor: they should recollect they have double difficulties, and dangers, and snares. The Lord help us! The longer I live, the weaker I find myself, and the more help I need.

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The secret of being happy and safe, is keeping always before us the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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It is His work for us that is the only foundation for His working by us.

## Peace and Love

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Ephes. 6:23; Jude 2.

Peace, what a precious sound!

Tell it the world around:

Christ hath made peace.

Our souls are brought to God

By the atoning blood,

And crown'd with every good:

He hath made peace.

Yes, 'twas the dying Lamb,

Jesus, the great "I Am,"

This peace who made.

'Twas His own life He gave,

Bowing beneath the grave,

Our guilty souls to save:

He peace hath made!

Love was the spring of all,

Love triumph'd o'er our fall—

The love of God!

My soul, this love adore,

And praise for evermore,

Yea, sound from shore to shore,

The love of God!

Lord, teach me line by line,

This wondrous love divine,

Without compare!

Its depths, its heights to know,

Its character to show,  
To mortals here below—  
Thy love so rare!  
Thus I shall peace enjoy,  
Who can its course destroy,  
When HE speaks peace?  
While trusting in my God,  
And heark'ning to His word,  
I shall not be disturb'd:  
For He speaks peace!

## Sin and Righteousness

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ALTHOUGH it be true that we have to do with One who “declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done;” yet has there always been a question at stake, between God and man, which in its results has only served to bring out into clearer view man’s utter ruin and inability to respond to the voice of God.

Until the coming of the Holy Son of God, the dealings of God with man were about Sin and Righteousness. Before the law was given, “the wickedness of man was great in the earth;” under the law, “sin became exceeding sinful,” and righteousness could not come by it. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.” And Christ came, offered Himself without spot to God, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself: settled the question, by receiving the wages of sin in His own person. It was enough—and God no longer seeks righteousness from sinners, nor charges home upon them the penalties attached to His broken law.

The testimony of the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, is unto One who was once offered to bear the sins of many; to declare the righteousness of God, that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Man, who by nature could not render to God the righteousness which He sought, thus stands before Him perfect and complete in Christ, made the righteousness of God in Him. To His blessed name the Holy Ghost bears witness. He takes of His things and shows them unto us. But if that name be rejected, the office of the Spirit is still to convince of sin—not merely on account of the flood of iniquity which rises up in the heart, or the deeds of darkness men have done,—but “OF SIN, because they believe not on Me.” This now is the question between God and man—the reception or rejection of God’s dear Son; and on those who receive Him not, the wrath of God abideth (John 1:12; 12:48).

But not so with the Church. From such God seeks righteousness, the conscience void of offence, the unsullied garment, the washen feet. His word is, “Holiness becometh thine house for ever;” and if any man defile the temple of God, judgment shall begin there, him shall God destroy. For our God is a consuming fire. Oh! that our souls had so gazed upon the beauty of holiness, so loved Him in whom it shone forth in perfect excellency, that our hearts might be rivetted upon Him in the love of it, expand in the liberty of it, and shrink unceasingly from the touch of evil. It is in the love of holiness that hatred of sin grows. If we are living in the light of heaven, our souls will sicken in the darkness of this world: if we are drinking of the pure river of water of life, we shall have no taste for the pleasures of sin: indeed, our standard will rise, we shall grow in the perception of what becometh saints. What yesterday we could do with a free heart, today will be sin to us; we shall go on to the end, like the leper after he was pronounced clean, cutting off many a natural thing, which has seemed to belong to our existence; putting off many a habit, which has formed part of our character; with the daily prayer on our lips, that God would sanctify us wholly, and preserve us—body, soul, and spirit—blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Observations on the History of Joseph

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Continued from page 71, vol.

## Joseph Before Pharaoh, and Exalted

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For two long years (the period alluded to in Ps. 105:19) “the word of the Lord tried” Joseph; deliverance had seemed to him to be very near, but his hopes were blighted, because they rested on an insecure foundation. God is jealous of our hearts, and He will not allow us to divide our confidence between Himself and another. This is a temptation into which we easily fall, and of everyday occurrence; circumstances attract the eye, and we divide our hopes between the probabilities apparent to our senses, and the living God, on whom alone our dependence should be placed. Joseph had relied upon the influence of the chief butler with Pharaoh, and the “word of the Lord tried him,” or as it should rather be rendered, refined him. He was obliged to prove the folly of any reliance on mere human aid or human hearts, and was led to depend simply on God and on His promises. Thus faith is tried after the same manner as silver and gold are refined—all mixture of dross is purged away—and the soul is at length taught to have no earthly expedients, but to lean upon the word and faithfulness of God alone. Israel was subsequently proved in a similar way at the waters of the Red Sea. The Lord led them by such a path, that they found themselves entirely shut in, without an apparent possibility of escape. Pharaoh and his mighty hosts were rapidly advancing from behind, mountains enclosed them on either side, and the deep impassable sea rolled its sullen waters before them; but in a few hours they sang the song of deliverance and triumph on the opposite shore. So the Lord deals oft-times with His people; they find themselves in circumstances where nothing but His help and His wisdom can avail; and when He has dried up all human springs and resources, the deliverance comes, and the song of praise ascends to Him. But lessons that we learn in seasons of emergency ought to furnish instruction for our every-day trials. The two truths which are realized in our greatest difficulties, are equally applicable to the smallest matters; viz., “I know that Thou canst do every thing;” and “Without Me ye can do nothing.”

Now the due season of Joseph’s deliverance arrived. God gave Pharaoh two dreams, and the chief butler is made to remember Joseph, and to mention him to Pharaoh. The dream was doubled, “because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.” Here was a remarkable voice of the Lord to Joseph himself God had previously doubled the dreams of glory to him, and yet we do not read that the certainty of this future glory was any comfort to him in his adversity; and until he actually saw his brethren bowing before him, as related in chap. xlii. we are not told that he remembered his dreams. Does not this give us a distinct voice of exhortation? The “sure word of prophecy,” as to the future joy and marvelous glory of the believer, is written “line upon line, line upon line,” throughout the scriptures of truth; and ought to be a light of life and comfort to us in our present path; just as Joseph’s dreams were designed to make his dungeon a place of peace and joy. But, alas! what creatures we are of time and sense. The trials of the present moment offer to our souls realities more mighty than the glories of the future; because we do not by faith make the things hoped for so much our portion as the things around us. It was this power of realizing the future that enabled the “cloud of witnesses” to endure such a fight of afflictions; and the Captain of Salvation Himself, “for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.” It is an easy matter to sing a song of triumph when the conflict is

over, and the victory won; but faith anticipates the song of triumph and the joy of victory now. He “giveth songs in the night.” Israel sang their song of rest, not when they entered the land, but when they commenced their toilsome journey through the wilderness. “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth thy people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation” (Ex. 15:13). God has doubled His testimony to us, His children, as he doubled the dreams to Joseph and Pharaoh; He has confirmed His counsel with an oath, “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” ( Heb. 6:18 ). And again the testimony of God’s power has twice been declared—first in creation, next in redemption: “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Ps. 62:11).

In Joseph’s audience with Pharaoh we again see his clear and bold testimony for God. It must have been no little trial of faith for a poor captive Hebrew to stand before such a mighty prince, surrounded with all the pomp and glory of Egypt, and with all the splendor of heathen worship and heathen gods, and to lift up his single voice for the living and true God. But Joseph repeats his blessed witness again and again, “It is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace;” “God hath showed Pharaoh,” &c.; “what God is about to do;” and “The thing is established by God.” What wisdom also does this youthful saint manifest in all the counsel he gives—truly “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Pharaoh is impressed with the conviction that there is a living God; the testimony and wisdom of this youthful saint strike home to his conscience, and he owns that the “Spirit of God” is in Joseph, and that God had showed him all that he had spoken. He also called his name “Zaphnath-paaneah,” or Revealer of secrets. Before Joseph became a revealer of secrets to others, he had revelations of his own from God; so with ourselves: if we would interpret the ways and purposes of our God towards others, we must ourselves first be fully acquainted with our own portion—we must realize our high and holy calling, and enter into and dwell in the sanctuary of the Most High. One reason why the blessed truths respecting the coming of our Lord have so little power, either over the children of God, or in arousing the world, is because those who testify these glorious certainties have themselves so little realized what they speak. The believer should be the Zaphnath-paaneah of the day—he should be able to speak with such an authority and certainty respecting the coming history of the Lord’s dealings with the world and the Church, that men should be convinced in their consciences of the reality of these things; but in order to do this; his own soul must first have the substance of them by faith, and he must wait on the Lord to open the way for his testimony. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Joseph carried conviction to the minds of those that heard him because he spoke with authority, fully convinced himself of the truth of what he uttered; and he also testified as one who was out of the scene: as regards himself he had no interest in the matter. He was but a poor captive in Egypt; but he was dwelling in “the secret place of the Most High.” Our words are powerless in arousing others, because they see that we are not acting as if we were fully convinced of their reality. We have too great a stake in the world which we denounce. We are not, as we should be, pilgrims and strangers in it; we savor too much of its ways, and are occupied too eagerly with the ambitions and advancements of the men of the earth around us. Like Lot, in the midst of Sodom, he had made himself so much at home there, and had cultivated so many alliances with the men of the city, that when the time came for him to warn them of the approaching judgment, his words seemed to them as idle tales; he was “as one that mocked.”

The wise and disinterested counsel given by Joseph to Pharaoh was the means of his being at once promoted to the place of honor and power. He had spoken what God bade him speak; and, in so doing, he unconsciously marked out his own path to the throne. The history of Haman, in the book of Esther, presents us with an instance exactly the reverse of this. Acting in full reliance on his own subtle wisdom, and judging only by sight, and not by faith, that enemy of God was bespeaking a path of glory for the man he most hated, at the very time that he imagined he was surely advancing his own dignity. "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number: who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: to set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong" (Job. 5:8-13).

The faith and experience of Joseph had been ripening: deep and repeated trials, in which the almighty power and wisdom of God—who raiseth the dead—were manifested, fitted him for the place of dignity; and, above all, qualified him to deal with the souls of his brethren. He had learnt much of his own heart's evil, and much of the grace and power of God; and thus he was adapted to fill the place of a king and priest. He affords us another type of One after the order of Melchizedek—combining royal power and the heart of a king, with the skillfulness of the priest in dealing with the consciences and souls of his brethren.

The names he gives his two children also plainly declare the happy state of his soul. (It is remarkable that we are in a like manner instructed as to the faith and exercise of the heart of Moses, during his sojourn in Midian, by the names he then bestowed upon his children—the offspring also of a Gentile wife.) "Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: for God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." How different this his experience from that through which his brethren had to pass. In their case, God made them again and again, by every fresh trial, remember their sin; but He made Joseph forget all his toil: the sore tribulation was effectually blotted out of his heart by the power of God—not by mere change of circumstances. How blessed the hope, that in a little while God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; He will make us forget all our toil. But it is for us to realize this by faith even now, whilst we are in tribulation. We are to count affliction light and but for a moment, even whilst passing through it, by comparing it with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Our hearts and our eyes are to be upon the throne, whilst we are, as it were, in the dungeon; and God can so enable us to walk by faith, and not by sight, that old things shall have passed away, and all things become new. Joseph had also been made to forget all his father's house. He had been enabled to commit them to God: much as he must have longed to behold those so dear to him, yet he had learned to wait patiently on the Lord to let Him have the sole ordering of the future respecting his father's house; so that, as regards any restlessness or anxiety of heart about them, they were forgotten. It was, not that the pomp and power with which he was invested had banished the recollection of his kindred from his memory, but God had made him forget them; and he was practicing the lesson he had learnt in his two years' detention in prison. Instead of devising means, which were so manifestly within his reach, for accomplishing his wishes, he left it all with God; and trusted that He would, in His own due time, bring about an interview with those so dear. He acts as a risen man in the circumstances. His father's house is all forgotten, as regards any mere natural desires respecting

them; all his hopes and prayers are for their spiritual blessing. Paul could say, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh"—the power of resurrection had obliterated all fellowships in the flesh: Christ was risen, Christ was his life; and thus all his hopes and joys, his fellowships and affections, were centered in and around his risen Lord. The only way to forget things below, is to realize things above; but it is easy to speak of these blessed truths. Have we the power of them? Has "God made us forget" our earthly parentage and prospects, by fixing our hearts and thoughts upon Himself—our Father in heaven—and on Jesus, who sitteth on His right hand? Do we know the mighty power of Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and the exceeding greatness of that power both towards us, and in us? (Eph. 1) God grant that we may write Manasseh upon our sorrows, upon our flesh, and upon the world. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him" (Ps. 45:10, 11).

"And the name of the second called he Ephraim: for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." Egypt was still the land of his affliction; his prosperity had not altered in his thoughts the character of the land wherein he dwelt; it was not his rest. He did not therefore record in the names of his children the wealth or power which God had marvelously bestowed upon him; but "fruitfulness in affliction" was that for which he especially was thankful to God. He realized the truth of the ancient riddle, long before it was uttered, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness;" and when his heart and flesh failed, and nature said "affliction," he was able by faith to say "fruitfulness." Here was a true son of Israel, not of Jacob: for his father, in one of the seasons of his deepest sorrow at the loss of his beloved wife, the mother of Joseph, had been enabled to say "Benjamin" instead of "Benoni." "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4). "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

## A Crumb

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IT is impossible to state a great portion of the truth of God in the way of doctrine. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” and it is by tracking Him in His way as He walked through this world, that we discover how much higher His ways are than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. Faith always gets a great deal more than faith can possibly reckon on. Faith receives that which God gives, and none can know the extent of that but “the Spirit who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,” and whose office it is to reveal to us “the things that are freely given to us of God.” If faith picks up a crumb, it finds in that crumb that which satisfies for ever.

In the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord lays bare the traditional religion of the Scribes and Pharisees; and teaches that man is not defiled by contact with defiling things, but that man himself is the source and power of defilement to all things around him. Defilement is in man, and comes from within him. This statement grievously offended the Pharisees, who could recognize outward defilement, capable of being removed by outward cleansing, but who knew not the heart of man to be the source of all defilement. To this they were blind, and were leading others, as blind as themselves, into the ditch; till at last both would be overwhelmed by their own corruptions.

After this teaching Jesus departs, not only to a different place, but to a very different scene. In the Pharisees the Lord had to do with the outward show of sanctity covering the inward corruption of the heart; in the Canaanitish woman, whom He met in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He had to do with reality—an outcast woman, not attempting to conceal the corruption of her heart.

It is a great thing to be real, not to be acting a part. “He that doeth truth cometh to the light.” But men are often maintaining a character, while that which is real is kept out of sight. It was so with the Pharisees: but the Lord Jesus pulled off the covering, when He said, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

“Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

She was a woman of Canaan, one of a cursed race, who could prefer no claim to the protection of the God of Israel; she was a “stranger to the covenants of promise.” But she felt her need and cried for mercy, and confessed Jesus as the Messiah, whilst He was abhorred by His own nation. Did ever one truthfully cry for mercy, and the Lord turn away His ear? Truthfully—by relinquishing all claim derived from ourselves,—truthfully, by acknowledging Jesus, as He is revealed by the Father. Little did the Pharisees then, or the Pharisees now, think what it is to “obtain mercy.” Even highly favored Israel must renounce all confidence in their advantages, “much every way,” and obtain, salvation on the alone ground of mercy (Rom. 11:31, 32).

“But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of

the house of Israel.”

She pleaded for mercy. The Lord is not obliged to hear or to answer—such obligation would destroy the very idea of mercy. Jesus answered her not a word. He who often anticipates the prayers of His people, “answering before they call,” is in this instance equally gracious in not answering, as though He heard not. Mercy is made to appear as mercy in both instances. The disciples knew not that the Lord was reading the heart of the poor outcast woman. They were displeased at her importunity, and would gladly have been rid of her, either by a miracle wrought on her behalf, or by a stern dismissal. But Jesus, when He does speak, appears to cut off all expectation from His supplicant. He was not sent to her, a woman of Canaan, but only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” She had no right to expect anything from Him. But there was “mercy” with Him.

“Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me.” The Lord had taken away from her all ground of claim; but this, instead of repulsing her, only brings her closer to Him, and low before His feet. There was that in her which said, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” There was faith in her, however unconscious she was of its existence and preciousness; for faith, like charity, never vaunts itself. On the contrary, it expresses need and helplessness, vileness and ignorance. “Lord, help me.”

But still the help does not immediately come. The Lord waits to be gracious. He knows how to call faith into exercise, and to make it plain, that “He has mercy on whom He will have mercy;” and this is His glory.

“But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.”

“Without are dogs.” Will she take the place of an outcast? Will she not resent as an insult the name? Will she acknowledge Israel to have title to the Lord’s favour, as being “children of the covenants, and of the promise which God made unto Abraham,” and herself to have no such ground to stand on? Will she snatch the children’s bread from them?

“And she cried, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”

Faith can never take too low a place; it leads to self-humbling, and, at the same time, to the exaltation of God into His right place. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” It is God Himself with whom faith has to do. Without faith we may seek things which God alone can give, but faith seeks God Himself. “Truth, Lord,” is the language of faith. “I am what thou sayest I am; even a dog; one of a cursed race. I take the place in truthfulness and sincerity; and that place, abject as it is, shall be my plea. May I not pick up a crumb? May I not take that which the children loathe and reject? I loathe myself, and dare not presume to take a place at the table; but the wanton full—fed children trample under foot their own mercies; what they loathe, I gladly accept.”

Little did that poor outcast woman, who took the dog’s place and used the dog’s plea, know the depth of the meaning of that which she uttered. But there was One there able to answer her above either what she asked or even thought.

“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

“All things are possible to him that believeth.” Let the desires be raised to the utmost, still the answer of God to faith will be found beyond our largest desires. It is God in all the riches of His grace, the immensity of His power, and the unsearchableness of His wisdom, who really interprets the cry of faith, and answers it according to what He Himself is. “Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt.”

But what a crumb did this poor dog pick up! It was nothing less than a rejected Christ; despised and rejected of men, but exalted and glorified by God; and He opened to her—and not only to her, but to all such as take her standing and use her plea—all the fullness which is in Himself.

There was all fullness in the unbroken bread, even in Jesus, who said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.” “But Israel would none of Him.” His own received Him not; yea, they took Him, and by wicked hands crucified and slew Him. The bread was broken and cast away by them; and any one might pick it up who needed it. The cross of Christ is the real crumb, and is the very means by which all the fullness of Jesus is laid open to a needy sinner. Although the fullness was in Jesus as He walked on this earth, it could not be appropriated until provision had been made by the cross to purge the conscience. Then a sinner could perceive all the fullness laid open to him, because the love of God had met his need, in not sparing His Son, but giving Him up for us all. Could we suppose the largest expectations of an Israelite, or even of the Lord’s own immediate disciples, to have been granted them by Jesus when He was among them, how infinitely short would all this be to the crumb which faith picks up in confessing a rejected Christ. Their thought was, that He would have redeemed Israel. This would, indeed, have been blessed for them; but look at the crumb—“In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.” This is the crumb which faith picks up now; and when once tasted, it becomes the warrant for the largest expectations; for God’s way is to give at once the greatest blessing as a security for all others. “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?” The crumb, even Jesus, “disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious,” is made to one who takes the place of a dog, to be more precious and more wonderful than all the miracles of mercy wrought by Jesus on earth—for Jesus Himself becomes the honor and preciousness set by God on all them that believe in His name.

However others may be rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, faith goes on learning the value of its crumb. “The offence of the cross has not ceased.” The great body of professing Christians have taken the place of the children of Israel, whose “table became their snare;” their manifest outward privileges leading them to reject Jesus. So now the many privileges, “much every way,” which the professing body in this land possess, lead them to rest satisfied with “their table.” The Gospel is a rejected Gospel, even as Jesus was personally rejected. And it is only when under “the manifold grace of our God,” who is excellent in working, that one and another is constrained to say, “Truth, Lord;” I am a sinner, I am lost, that the rejected Gospel is really received; and that wonderful crumb, even the doctrine of Christ crucified, becomes to the soul “the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” To the burdened, weary, empty, craving sinner, the crumb is proffered; and wherever it is received, the gracious word is added, “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

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REMEMBER JESUS.—Did you ever consider the common sin of which we are reminded, and for which we ought with deep sorrow to sorrow before God, when these words are brought to mind, “YET NO MAN REMEMBERED THAT SAME POOR MAN?” Who, “though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor,” &c. He partook of flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death—that is, the devil; and deliver the city against which the bulwarks were built: Yet no man remembered that same poor Man—His wisdom despised, His words not heard. “THEN said I, Wisdom is better than strength.... better than weapons of war” (Eccl. 9:14-18). Our wisdom, safety, joy, peace, is to remember HIM.

The Wilderness

Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13.

Is not the wilderness a figure of the world—this present evil world, which, though shone upon and watered from above, brings forth nothing but briars and thorns; bears no fruit for God? The waste, howling, terrible wilderness, in which were pits and scorpions, through which Israel of old passed, and in which they wandered forty years, was surely to them a figure of the world: in it no rest for the sole of the foot could be found; and water out of the smitten rock in Horeb, and manna from heaven must be given, or they would perish. In the wilderness, alas! they tempted God, asking meat for their lust, and, despising the good land, did so provoke God, that He aware in His wrath, “They shall not enter into My rest.” They forgot The Rock that begat them, and corrupted themselves—a solemn lesson to the saints. Israel became a wilderness; Israel became the world, “Ye are from beneath;” “Ye are of your father the devil;” “Ye are of this world.” Israel had become as the nations: the vineyard of the Lord, a wilderness. “Lo Ammi,” not My people, was truly written upon them. But for a very little remnant, they were become as Sodom and Gomorrah. Unclean spirits, deaf and dumb spirits, legion in name, inhabited Jacob, the lot of God’s inheritance. Fallen and turned away from Jehovah, Satan had got his throne amongst them. The Holy One of God is led Up of the Spirit into the wilderness (the literal a figure of the spiritual) to be tempted. Surely the wild beasts have another signification, and not that of lions and bears merely. Is not fallen human nature bestial? (Rom. 1). Is not the position of the saint in the world very similar to that of our Lord in the wilderness? Does he not find the world a wilderness, the scene of Satan’s power, and where he is assaulted with temptations, according to the pattern of Him who is the Captain of our salvation? but does he overcome, as Jesus did; or fall, after the example of the unbelief and disobedience of Israel of old? Jesus says, “I have overcome the world,” its prince, and its god. Can you, in My victory, withstand, overcome, and stand? Do you realize your position in the world to be such as Mine in the wilderness? What was there for Me there, save temptation; or for God, but dishonor, and not glory? The wilderness produced nothing for Me or for God. What do you find for yourself in it? Surely the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life make up the wilderness now—the world which lieth in the Wicked-one, incapable of ministering aught to the saint: in it he must hunger, and learn that he lives “not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, for He was not of this world. His prayer for us to the Father is, “Not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” Satan, that roaring lion, may indeed desire to have the weakest and most exposed saint as a prey, but Jesus has prayed for such a one that his faith fail not; and this is the victory that overcometh the world—the wilderness, its weary journeys and watch-lags; its hungerings, through inability to supply aught that is good according to God; its trials and temptations—even our faith. Doubtless there is more in the passage, but I have only sought to make a spiritual and practical application of it.

The Prayers in Eph. 1 & 3 Contrasted

IN chapter 1 the Apostle had been speaking of that unto which the Church was predestinated—of the dispensation of the fullness of times—of the inheritance, and the redemption of the purchased possession.

Therefore, in the prayer which follows, he addresses God as the Father of GLORY; his petition is for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that their understandings might be enlightened, that they might know the glory of this inheritance, and the greatness of that power which wrought in them—even that power which raised up Christ from the dead, and put Him far above every name which is named, either in this world or in that which is to come.

But in chapter 3 the Apostle had been speaking of tribulation, desiring that they should not faint. He was himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ for them (verse 1); but it was their glory (verse 13): yet was it glory in the form of SUFFERING; not that which had occupied chapter 1. Therefore his prayer now is to the FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ, not for “the spirit of wisdom,” but “to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.” The wilderness way was in his thought, not so much the future glory; and he does not take them far above principality and power, where Christ is set, but prays that down here “Christ may dwell in their hearth by faith,” that they may know, not the exceeding greatness of His power, but the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of His Love, which yet “passeth knowledge.” Their PRESENT NEED was upon the Apostle’s heart, and the assurance is, “God is able to do above all we ask or think:” but their condition was one of necessity, and although God be able to do for them exceeding abundantly, the word which belongs to the wilderness condition is, “ask,” “think.”

Another point of contrast may be marked in the words (chapter 1), “His body, the fullness of HIM that filleth all in all” and in chapter 3, “That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” In chapter 1 we are beholding Christ, the knowledge of Him, His calling, His inheritance, the power that wrought in Him, and made Him head over all; the Church coming in as His fullness. But in chap. 3 the Apostle seeks to pour all of grace, glory, or love, into that empty vessel the Church, to fill up their hearts to the brim, even that they “might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Leviticus 15:1-25

THE ordinances of God in the time of the law will be found, in their materials, to have been very homely, such as had to do with the commonest transactions of human life; and yet, in their meaning, to have disclosed or shadowed forth the deepest mysteries of Christ. For instance, the ordinance of the servant with the bored ear. The material there was the common matter of hiring a domestic—a thing, we will all allow, of the most homely nature; and yet in it was involved, and through it was shown forth, the mystery of the riches of the grace of Christ.

So, in the Scripture I am now looking at. The subject or material is the sale and purchase of land, the price at which such bargains were to be regulated, and the term of years for which such transfers of property were to continue. But the truths conveyed through this ordinance are some of the profoundest and most interesting parts of the ways of God.

This quality in the divine institutions only sets them of to greater admiration. While conveying to the soul the knowledge of Christ, the more homely they are in their materials, the more serviceable they must be to us, and the more welcomed they ought to be by us. We should afresh honor the skill of the Master who can teach so profoundly with such a book. And we have in these things a beautiful illustration of that truth, “To the poor the gospel is preached.”

The divine ceremonies are not ceremonies, if I may so speak. They are ceremonies as being the due ways of the house. But they are not stiff and stately. They do not keep us at a distance, or require some special occasions for their display. The disciple learns them, and the worshipper observes them, in the midst of family or social life.

Among these institutions or divine ordinances, I would now look a little more particularly at that enacted in Lev. 25. The great principles of the whole chapter will be found, I believe, in this portion of it; and therefore I look only at so much of it, i.e., the first twenty-five verses.

First, there is the principle of earnest, a well-known principle, I may say, in the actings of God with us. The grapes of Eshcol were the earnest of Canaan to the camp of Israel, while still in the wilderness or on the way. The Holy Ghost is now the earnest of the inheritance in the saint, travelling on through this present evil world, to “the rest that remaineth.” And the sabbath of the land, enacted in this scripture, was the earnest of the Jubilee, while the term of forty-nine years, the age of the confusion and disorder of man’s way, was still existing. It was a bunch of the fruit of the year of Jubilee, brought into the midst of the wilderness again. This sabbath did not do the business of the year of Jubilee, but still it savored of it; it did not anticipate it, but it witnessed it (see v. 1-7).

In the next place, we find the principles of redemption by purchase, and redemption by strength, in this scripture; and the gap or interval which lies between the seasons of these two actions of the Christ of God, is likewise beautifully intimated.

The kinsman, according to this ordinance, was to redeem the sold possession, by paying the proper price of it to the stranger who had purchased it. This was to be done during the forty-nine years, the age of misrule and confusion, "man's day," as scripture would call it. But then also, in due season, or in the fiftieth year, the Jubilee would, by its own virtue, restore every such sold possession, and also every sold Israelite, to that place in the land and among the people, appointed by the lord of the land and the people at the beginning. Every man was then to return to his family and to his possession. God's order, for forty-nine years disturbed by man's traffic, was then to be asserted and exhibited again.

These are some of the deep purposes of God in Christ. Paul speaks of "the earnest of the inheritance, till the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1); thus disclosing the very principles we discover in this beautiful ordinance, as we have seen; the earnest, the purchase, the full redemption or restoration, and the necessary interval between the purchase and the redemption. As again, in Rom. 8; for there he speaks of "the first-fruits of the Spirit" in the saints, while they wait for "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

And what (I pause for a moment to ask) is the living power of such mysteries in our own souls? Peace and hope dwelling there together with the enjoyment of the Spirit's presence; the peace which the accomplished purchase by blood speaks, the hope which the approaching Jubilee or full redemption inspires, and the consolation of the indwelling Spirit, who is the seal of the accomplished peace, and the earnest of the expected inheritance. When peace and hope thus dwell together in the soul, and the indwelling Spirit is enjoyed, we do, in living experiences, understand the mysteries of this fine Scripture.

Further, however, still. This ordinance tells us, that the Lord God, if I may so express myself, will not allow man to have the last word, or to take eternity into his hand, and dispose of it, as he pleases. Man has a term of years granted him, in which it is left in his power to disturb God's order. But that license is limited. It continues, as we have seen, only for forty-nine years. But "the land shall not be sold for ever," says the Lord; "the land is Mine" (ver. 23). In the fiftieth year, the Lord will assert his right, and restore all things, according to His own mind. A time of "refreshing" that will be, a time for "the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19-21).

What a bright and happy truth thus shines in this verse of our chapter! "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," is the fine proclamation of the 24th Psalm, and also of this ordinance. The voice of this ordinance thus joins in concert with other words of the same Spirit. And I may again say, what bright and happy truth thus shines through this ordinance touching such a common matter as the buying and selling of land! No material or subject, I may also again say, could be more homely, no mysteries more profound and blessed! We cannot but admire the wisdom which thus teaches; which finds, as people have aptly said, "sermons in stones, and words in the running brooks;" which leaves the memorial of the Lord and His counsels in the midst of the occasions and circumstances of every day life.

But further still. There are moral admonitions and principles of godly conduct here, as well as deep and precious mysteries. The Jew was taught by this ordinance to measure the value of his worldly possessions, by the year of Jubilee; for his sales and purchases were to be appreciated by either the distance or nearness of that season. All his trading or worldly business, therefore, of necessity reminded him of the fiftieth year, or God's approaching kingdom. All his traffic in the land

measured for him how near or how distant that season was.

What a consecration of all the business of life was this! what a constant sense of God did this maintain in the hearts of the children of Israel! Just as the Spirit, through the Apostle, seeks to maintain the same in us, saying, "The time is short: it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not."

But I must speak still once more. This beautiful scripture exhibits the encouragements of the Lord in obedience, as well as the commandments of the Lord to it. For the Israelites are here animated in the observance of the sabbath of the land by a promise of great increase every sixth year.

How lovely this is, as well as all the rest; and how significant of another well-known way of the Lord; for to this hour, in our own dispensation, encouragements of the highest character are given to the obedience of the saints. To those who keep His words, the Lord says, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

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Heavenly fellowship brings its heaven with it.

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If we, as the received of the Lord, walk in private much in the path where the blood of the Redeemer is found, our footsteps in public will not be without it.

On Conformity to Christ

2 Cor. 3:18.

NOTHING so pains us as the consciousness of our lack of conformity to Christ. We admit the reasonableness of yielding our bodies a living sacrifice unto Him who hath saved us with an everlasting salvation; and in our happiest moments are constrained to sing,

All that I have, and all I am,

Shall be for ever Thine.

Still we sorrow that this is so seldom our state of heart—that shame and confusion of face are so often our experience, rather than the joy of walking with God. We do well to lay this matter to heart.

While the Apostle Paul fully admitted that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelt “no good thing,” and that it was by the grace of God he was what he was, still we know he was so truly an imitator of the meek and lowly Jesus, that without presumption, he could say, “For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). While on another occasion he could appeal to the Thessalonian saints, thus, “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:10); and again to another Church: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; see also Phil. 4:9).

It is to be feared that with many who sincerely desire to be practically following Jesus, the object is defeated by the way in which it is sought to be attained. One of the first thoughts that often suggests itself to a soul whose desires are afresh kindled for conformity to Christ, is to make a more zealous effort to attend to the outward observances of religion; and a warmer resolution to be more diligent in what may, and with some propriety, be termed Christian duties. But while these things are, in their proper place and season, highly deserving our culture; yet we may rest assured, that if we begin here, it is not beginning in the right direction. The conflict and correction must begin within, rather than in anything around; and our thoughts and position of soul towards the Lord Himself should first be most solemnly considered. The fleshly mind is ever ready to plan and arrange, with reference to things without; but the Spirit of God searches the heart, and ministers to the affections and conscience. The veil of unbelief is securely drawn over every natural heart; it is the noxious weed which the unregenerate soil spontaneously produces; and we sorrowfully know how rapidly this weed springs up, even in those who know the Lord. It is of the utmost consequence that we “keep our heart with all diligence,” lest this veil in any measure obtrude, dim our spiritual vision, and hinder our beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with an open and unveiled face. It is only when the eyes of our understanding are thus steadily set upon Jesus, the glorified Redeemer, that we are enabled truly to say, In Thy light we see light.

But it is especially while contemplating Jesus risen, and glorified as the Head of the Church, His body—realizing our personal interest, standing, and security in Him—beholding as in a glass the

glory of the Lord—that we become changed into the same image. How blessed the thought is! We are in Him that is true—complete in Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (Col. 2:10, 1 Cor. 1:30). As the One who hath gotten Him the victory, the triumphant Redeemer of His people, the Conqueror of all our enemies, the Lord our righteousness, He sits on the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour. It is with Christ in God that our life is hid. The Lord nourishes and cherishes the Church; “for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” It is HIM we are to contemplate with a full assurance of faith; and our perfection in Him that we should seek to realize with a full assurance of understanding. Soul-comforting considerations! but how deeply important that our spiritual eyes should be anointed with eye-salve, that we may be able to look up into heaven, and rightly estimate our true position and standing in the Lord Jesus; realizing our everlasting and unchangeable relationship to God and the Lamb, by “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.”

There is no bondage in this: it is the happy liberty of the Spirit of God. It presents to us an already-accomplished salvation, for ever fixed, and secure from the reach of every foe. Souls thus exercised will be “glad in the Lord,” humbled under a sense of the exceeding riches of sovereign grace, melted with an increased feeling of utter unworthiness, and constrained to live only to Him who died for us, and rose again. A true spirit of worship takes possession of the heart, and a song of gratitude is the instinctive fruit of the lips; the inner man becomes strengthened in the grace of Christ Jesus; the world is only known as a Christ-rejecting territory, lying in the Wicked-one; sin is felt to be exceedingly sinful; the flesh is known as crucified with Christ, and the saints as raised up and seated in heavenly places in Him. The precepts of the word of God also are acknowledged as most suitable, and congenial to heaven-born heaven-bound pilgrims, and the commandments found to be “not grievous.” Hence the hidden, crafty, dishonest workings of the flesh, though often detected, are not tolerated, but denounced; and as the Lord Himself fills the eye and heart, so His divine characteristics shine forth in our walk and conduct, and we become increasingly conformed to His blessed example. We are kept in peace in the presence of God and the Lamb; we cast all our care upon Him who careth for us; we rejoice in Christ Jesus, worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh; we grow in the habit of comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and of weighing things only in the balance of the sanctuary; thus, by manifesting Christ, The Truth, we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. “With open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18).

How perfect will this transformation be when the Lord returns! “Our vile body” will then be changed, and “fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). For this blessed perfection we wait, knowing that “when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Meanwhile, beloved, let us seek to be true followers of the holy child Jesus; not in fleshly efforts, but in the life and walk of faith; being daily nourished and strengthened by the soul-sustaining virtues of the blood of the Lamb.

Remarks on 1 Cor. 1

THE Cross of Christ is the heart and center of all the believer's hopes and feelings. The right understanding of it settles every question. Any departure from a saving and practical view of the Cross must bring darkness upon the soul, and hinder our joy, peace, and holy walk; Christ is our peace (Eph. 2:14), "having made peace through the blood of His Cross" (Col. 1:20). Well then might Paul say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). The Cross had broken his connection with the world, and he could boldly affirm, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation."

Paul was jealous, lest anything should come in to weaken or prejudice the full force of the Cross over the consciences of Saints. He would have it to be unrivalled and alone, unmixed, full and free; the only ground of a believer's hope, his only rule of practice. Satan was early in the field, seeking to weaken and destroy the simplicity and power of the Cross. Paul's labors were abundant in seeking to defend the Churches against his wiles.

'The Cross! the Cross! oh, that's our gain!

Because, on that the Lamb was slain,'

will be our eternal song; the foundation and the depth of our everlasting joy and praise. It is there we have learned all we know of God, and none beside the redeemed can sing their song of praise, or know, experimentally, the vastness of its import.

The Corinthians seem to have strangely departed from the Cross. Although, through mercy, they were neither enemies nor deniers of it; yet they were holding certain elements, and had adopted certain practices which were contrary to the Cross. In this chapter, Paul seeks to set them right as to New Testament principles, to recover them from foreign elements, and to re-plant, as it were, the Cross in their midst. Divisions and contentions had sprung up amongst them, and disturbed their harmony; owing to every one of them saying, "I am of Paul: and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas: and I of Christ." To set aside this uplifting of man, and the making Christ the head of a party, of a few, and not the whole, Paul proposed three questions— "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or, were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Are not these questions deeply important for our times also? If rightly understood, they would unite the saints around the Cross, for an undivided Christ admits not of a divided body. If due preference were given to the Cross, a thousand elements of division would be abandoned; fathers, young men, and babes, would at once meet around the Cross, on one common level, to hail together their common salvation. If Christ is not divided, should His Church be so? If Paul was not crucified for us, why be called after any other name, badge, or distinction, save that name which is common to all? If we were baptized in Jesus' name, why take another? What distinctions do Christian people require? Is it not that they, are not separated from one another, though they are from the world? Such were Paul's searching questions, thrown in amongst Corinthian divisions and failures,—the type of ours. Men would be

wise in their own conceits; these conceits the Cross sets aside. It makes him, who knows its power, foolish in the eyes of men; “for the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness.” Carnal wisdom, that seeks credit amongst men, says, “I am of Paul,” &c. “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” Paul, like his Master, would not pander to human pride. He boldly tells the Corinthians, that, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, and things despised, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.....That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:27, 31). The Cross makes Jesus everything, and all beside nothing.

From this feeble outline, we may at once see where the Cross of Christ would place us. God will not tolerate the admixture of things that differ. Christ and his Cross must be everything or nothing. It separates us, root and branch, from the world, its ways, its philosophy (so called), and all its rudiments and pretensions, and leaves no room for the pride of the human heart. From thence, God in Christ shines forth as all in all. Let the Saints fully hold this, and they will soon be united together, if not in worship, at least in love. At the Cross we learn our emptiness and our folly. There we find God’s gracious and abundant supply for all our need. There we see everything for us, and nothing against us. It is true, we see there displayed the holiness and the severity of God, as One intolerant of sin; but there we also find, that that which measures our iniquity, also puts it away. There we see the floods of God’s anger poured forth on the devoted head of His Son; and now that these water-floods are assuaged, like Noah’s dove, we pluck away our olive-branch to flourish for ever in the courts above. Would that our eyes, like the Cherubim of old, were ever fixed upon the mercy-seat of our God! Would that our hopes, our practice, ever found their character and their depth at the Cross of Christ! Would that there were that heart in us that turned aside from all it condemns! Lord, ever grant to thy children to know all that this wondrous Cross imparts, and so to be ashamed of all besides, that they shall ever be able to say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen!

Peace

“Peace,” ‘tis a word well known above,
In regions of unclouded love,
Where God His glory doth display,
In realms of bright and endless day.
But peace the sinner now may know,
Whilst traversing this world below,
If shelter’d by “the precious blood,”
That blood which speaketh “peace with God.”
‘Tis Jesu’s gift, “the Lord of peace,”
His power and love can never cease:
He suffer’d death and cruel pain,
That sinners might this “peace” obtain.
But would the saint this peace enjoy,
Calm and unmix’d, without alloy,
His willing ear must be attent
To God, and Christ whom He hath sent;
To trust the Lord for every day,
To tarry in the narrow way,
To hearken to the Spirit’s voice.
And in the will of God rejoice.
No peace is found for human will,
Its restless mind is never still;
But he who puts his trust in God
Shall never fear, nor yet be mov’d.
Oh, foolish hearts! why trust in man,
Whose days on earth are but a span?

Within his nostrils is his breath,
And soon is he cut off by death.
But trusting in the mighty Lord,
And guided by His certain word,
Your joys and pleasures shall increase,
Your life uninterrupted peace.
This "Peace of God," beyond compare,
To weary pilgrims, O how dear!
As on this journey they pursue,
With Heaven's eternal rest in view.

Is. 26:3; 48:18, John 14:27; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14-17; Phil. 4:7; Col. 1:20; Heb. 12:24.

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He is most likely to fall into temptation who most scorns a warning. He who most truly depends on the Lord for succor in time of temptation, will be most thankful for any warning against it.

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To have the conscience clean and tender, we must deal much, through the Scriptures, with the deep and solemn truth, "CHRIST died for our sins."

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We should not consider the quantity of our service so much as the quality: a small bit of gold is of more value than a large lump of dross.

## Elijah and Obadiah

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1 Kings 18:1-10.

“THE fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The unregenerate are not in this secret: they have “no fear of God before their eyes.” In the Lord Jesus we see this grace, like every other, in perfection. In His saints, this blessed workmanship of the Spirit is more or less manifested, according to the measure of the gift of grace, and the sphere of walk and service to which they are called. Elijah had long walked in the fear of the Lord; he, therefore, feared not the wicked and mighty Ahab. This dignified man of the earth was but weak and impotent in the account of the man of faith, who waited upon the Lord God of Israel with a circumcised ear. The believing eye beholds the Majesty of heaven as having all dominion and might, and perceives Him overruling all the ways of men, to carry out His own eternal purposes and counsels; thus making even the wrath of man to praise Him. The spirit of the prophet had rested in the fear of the Lord for “many days,” in the retirement of the widow’s house at Zarephath. Now, however, the voice of Him whom He fears commands his steps and services in another direction, and, like one of old, he is able to say, “Behold, here am I.” “And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.” This must have been an affecting announcement to the quiet and happy little circle at Zarephath; but the prophet seems not surprised; he is ready for the bold service. He was, we know, a man of prayer; and the blessedness of secret dealing with God is again made manifest. Happy indeed, beloved, are those who, while occupying the retirement and quiet of the family circle, can yet be found with girded loins and the staff in hand when the Master calls, ready to bear an open testimony for the Lord before the face of His enemies. Such, I presume, was the state of soul of this dear servant of the Lord, for we are told that “Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab.” What can be more instructive to us, beloved, or more beautifully in season than this fruit of the Spirit of God? How needful that we should so diligently use our leisure moments in fellowship with the Lord, that we may be prepared unto every good word and work, or that, when he cometh and knocketh, we may open to Him immediately!

But there was another in the land besides Elijah who “feared the Lord greatly,” and who also, in another sphere and manner, glorified the God of Israel. Though members of the same elect family, they were not gifted alike—not called to show forth the characteristics of the Lord in the same line of things; nevertheless, both were vessels of mercy, both wrought on by the same Spirit, both servants of the Lord, both fearing the God of Israel, but each was called to a distinct character of service, even as it is now. Obadiah does not seek to imitate Elijah, nor Elijah to perform the same kind of service as Obadiah. They both fear the Lord, and seek, more or less, to do HS holy will, though their faith and love flow out in different channels. Elijah, evidently, was specially called to bear a public testimony to the nation of Israel, while Obadiah’s place was to glorify God in the king’s palace—he “was governor of the king’s house.”

As a servant to his earthly master, Obadiah was, doubtless, faithful and true. It was a place of trust, as well as of honor and distinction; and his feeding the prophets of the Lord, whom his mistress had condemned to death, plainly skews the reality of his fear of God, his love to the brethren, and the readiness with which he could risk his own life, rather than unite with the enemies of the Lord in the persecution of His servants. With all this godly fear, however, there was no fellowship of spirit between Elijah and Obadiah when they came together, though they knew each other. Obadiah lacked an important feature in the character of his divine Master. "The world cannot hate you," said Jesus, "but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7). Our blessed Lord not only walked in holy separation from the evil that surrounded Him, but He also reproveth its ungodly character. He was in every sense the Faithful Witness. We do not, I observe, find this faithful testimony in Obadiah; hence, he was ill prepared for fellowship in the Spirit with Elijah. The king's house, in which he abode, was not only the house which was best supplied with provisions in the time of sore famine; but, as it has been in all ages, was also a place of earthly honor, distinction, and authority. This history, however, is very important, as showing us, that one may fear the Lord greatly, and yet come short of the Lord's mind; in one's ways be glorifying God in some things, and fall far behind in others; and that some of the household of faith, through reserves and unfaithfulness, may be incapable of walking in fellowship with the more single-eyed followers of the Lord Jesus.

Elijah, doubtless, felt, when he met Obadiah, that his position savored too much of the world, to enable him to reckon upon much fellowship with him. The honored prophet had for years been trusting in the living God for daily bread, and had found that neither the cruse of oil had failed, nor the barrel of meal wasted. Obadiah, however, was running over the land, at Ahab's command, to find grass to save the cattle alive; and Elijah recognizes him as the king's servant, and says, "Go, tell thy lord, Behold Elijah is here." This was, indeed, a most extraordinary request, for which Obadiah was not at all prepared. Though a man of God, he had not been, practically, a man of faith; and, therefore, instead of considering the matter in the light of God's countenance, he receives the summons with an uncircumcised ear, judges after a carnal manner, and reckons from what he knows of the character and ways of the king, on nothing less than the loss of his life. "What have I sinned," said he, "that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me" (v. 9-14).

How unlike the language of faith is this verbose reply to the prophet's request! Fear of man, distrust of God, and self-complacency, are its principal elements; and I would ask, what other character of things emanate from souls that are not walking in the light, as He is in the light? Hath not the Scripture concluded that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin"? Doth not this little narrative forcibly remind us of that proverb, "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure

and trouble therewith?" The atmosphere of Ahab's palace, untestified against, was too defiling for such fine fruit of the Spirit to luxuriate in, as was found so seasonable and matured in the retired cottage at Zarephath. We do well to remember that our calling is into the fellowship of Christ, who hath delivered us from the present evil world, and who said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." But this lesson is only to be learned effectually by the heart and conscience becoming acquainted with the mind of God in Christ crucified. The cross of our Lord Jesus indelibly records the alienated and corrupt condition of the world. Its wisdom, religion, and power, all combined to crucify "the Lord of glory." "He came into the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." But while the cross of Christ thus so legibly depicts the whole world as lying in the Wicked-one, it also proclaims the full forgiveness of our sins, our deliverance from guilt and death, and our complete and everlasting salvation. The instruction we unquestionably gather from thus meditating on Christ crucified, is not only that we should "come out from among the ungodly, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing," but also, that we should "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." The word of "testimony" is associated in the sacred Scriptures with overcoming by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11). May we have no reserves, beloved, but increasingly desire to "stand perfect and complete in ALL the will of God!"

The Spirit of God reads to us deeply solemn and searching lessons in this short but comprehensive narrative. It will be profitable, and redound to the glory of God, if it serve to warn any of us against the pernicious error of fearing men, instead of serving our "masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart, fearing God." Had a plain faithful testimony been given to the wicked king, by his believing servant, he would not have given such an unspiritual reply to the Lord's prophet: but, "the fear of man bringeth a snare." Elijah, however, patiently hears the loquacious answer of Obadiah; but his eye, at this moment, was too single to notice it; and, therefore, as one who consciously abides in the presence of God, and is firmly set upon doing His will, Elijah says, "As the Lord of Hosts liveth before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him to day" (v. 15).

This was a solemn era in Obadiah's life, for he felt at this moment, I believe, in common with many others under soul-convictions, that his career had arrived at such a crisis as compelled him to take a step, either forward in the fear of the Lord, with the prospect of suffering, or backward, through the fear of man, into the snare of the enemy, with the human prospect of ease and quietness. The wise and unyielding decision of the man of faith was so forcible, exemplary, and unanswerable, that Obadiah, without another word, "went to meet Ahab: and told him." Thus, the snare was broken, the trembling, halting, God-fearing man delivered, the service of the Lord performed; and the imaginary evil, which the adversary had made so formidable to his fleshly fears, now vanished before the step of faith— "Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah."

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Those who choose disobedience and embrace sin, will be overpowered by sin and embraced with wrath. Happy only those who have confessed sin, and, self-condemned, go through Christ to God's embrace.

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“I go to prepare a place for you.” We too often lose sight of the way: we speak of Him as our Advocate now with the Father, but do not bear in mind His sufferings—how He came at the right hand of God.

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Man regards you according to the power of your hand; God and the godly regard the heart.

“The Rock, His Work Is Perfect.”

DEUT. 32:4.

THERE is a remarkable passage in Hooker’s “Discourse of Justification,” written upwards of two hundred and forty years since. It is this, “It may seem somewhat extreme which I will speak; Therefore, let every one judge of it even as his own heart shall tell him, and no otherwise; I will but only make a demand. If God should yield unto us, not as unto Abraham; if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons should be found in a city, for their sakes that city should not be destroyed; but, and if he should make us an offer thus large; search all the generations of men since the fall of our father Adam, find one man that hath done one action which has past from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all, and for that one man’s only action, neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both. Do you think that this ransom to deliver men and angels could be found to be among the sons of men?”

Whilst the Christian, who is most deeply occupied in self-judgment, a most important part of his priestly function, before “the throne of grace,” will acknowledge, most heartily, the truth of so broad and searching a statement; instead of being discouraged at such a discovery, it will lead him to “encourage himself in the Lord,” and to value that present priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, which ever goes on for him in heaven.

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Philippians, says, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.” This last word, the translators have rendered in the margin, “sense;” which seems to be more correct than judgment. The Spirit that “rested” on Jesus was the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; it made Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, so that He did not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears (Is. 11: 2, 3). Now, the same Spirit which rested and abode on Jesus, because of His intrinsic holiness, in other words, because of that which He personally was, dwelleth in those that are His, because they are “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;” not because of that which they personally are, but because of that which they are made by His grace in Him, even the righteousness of God in Him. And the Holy Ghost is to them “the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord;” so that the more deeply He instructs them in the knowledge of Jesus, the more sensitive they become in the fear of the Lord. Where others discern faultlessness in them, they discover a mixture of motives which they can hardly separate; but Jesus, their great High Priest, can separate the precious from the vile, and take up and present that which is of the Spirit, as acceptable to God, which by reason of infirmity the sensitive soul could not itself separate. All this turns to a testimony. The Lord Jesus is the Rock, the only one in whom is no flaw, no mixed motive, no bias by the power of circumstances, no seeking of His own. He is the Rock, the One to be depended on because of that which He Himself is. He “needeth not” to have anything done for Him. And the moment it pleased the Father to reveal to Peter the Glory of the Person of the Son, the Lord could speak of a Rock on which to build His Church. He is the Rock. Peter’s confession to the glory of His Person is the Rock; as

Peter teaches, "To Whom coming as unto a living stone." Peter and his fellow Apostles were the doctrinal founders of the Church; because they laid no other foundation than that chosen and precious Stone, disallowed indeed of men, which God had laid to try conclusions with men, whether His or their foundation should stand (see Is. 28:14-17). Hence we are taught, that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone."

But it is because "He is the Rock," that "His work is perfect." "The Preacher" thus defines perfection, "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men should fear before Him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

It is blessed, indeed, to contrast the Lord with the works of His own hands in creation. "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands; they shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall was old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." But in redemption, we cannot separate the work from the Worker. All the wonderful works which the Lord Jesus did during His ministry on earth, must give place to that one work, of which He Himself was the subject, "He was numbered with the transgressors." He is the Rock, "His work is perfect." It is "once," "finished," and "for ever." Here alone is absolute perfection. "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). "It is finished." We say not, it was finished, as we say, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished" (Gen. 2:1); because the expression would not imply absolute perfection, but "It is finished." The work and the Rock are so identified, that the perfection of the Rock is carried into the work; and it is of the same value and efficacy, the same freshness and preciousness to God, this very moment, as on the very day that Jesus gave Himself for our sins. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and as He is, so is His work. It is "for ever." As concerning sin, by His work, He hath made "an end of sin;" concerning righteousness, He hath "brought in everlasting righteousness" (Heb. 9:26; Dan. 9:24); concerning redemption, He hath "obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12).

When the apostle contrasts the ministry of Moses with that of the New Testament (2 Cor. great and glorious as that of Moses was, it wanted the element of permanence; it was but transient and to be done away. "For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." This is one most blessed element of the ministry of the New Testament. Whoever conies under its power by its reception, comes under permanent blessing. The Lord sent forth His apostles to "bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Contrast the highest human glory with the thought of one sinner brought to Christ. All human glory passes away, but if one sinner be brought to Christ it is "for ever." Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be "for ever."

But the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is so perfect, "that nothing can be put to it." The Galatian Christians attempted to add their observance of the law to the work of Christ, but this was really to detract from the perfection of the work of Christ. Hence, the apostle cries out with holy jealousy, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Little do even real Christians think of the constant tendency in their hearts to disparage the perfect work of Christ, by putting something to it. They allow the doctrine, that the work is perfect—is

finished; yet, through the deceitfulness of their hearts, they often practically deny it. The Christian experience, real Christian service, genuine Christian graces may be put to the work of Christ, and thus, in reality, frustrate the grace of God, and nullify the death of Christ. He is jealous; and jealous especially in this respect, lest even that which, by His grace, He communicates to us should be put to that work which He hath finished for us. It was prohibited to the Israelite, under the most solemn sanction, to make any perfume like that of the incense to be “put before the testimony in the tabernacle.” “Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from His people” (Ex. 30:34-38).

Without any controversy, “works of righteousness,” and the graces of the Spirit are, through Jesus Christ, well pleasing unto God. But, if we “smell thereto,” if there be more fragrantcy in them, in our estimation, than in the perfect work of Christ, we are depreciating that work, by putting that to it which never had been at all, had it not been for the perfect work of Christ. Yet it is no uncommon thing for a Christian to admire in himself or in another, the grace of Christ, which is in Him or in another, rather than the grace of God in the perfect work of Christ. Let the best thing that any saint ever did be put to the work of Christ, and it immediately stamps imperfection on that work.

But if the perfection of the work of Christ is nullified by the addition of anything to it, it is equally nullified by taking anything from it. Christ “gave Himself for our sins.” “He is the Rock, His work is perfect.” It is because the work which He wrought, is the giving Himself, that the work is so singular and so perfect. The least diminution from the glory of the person of Christ, detracts from the perfection of His work. If He be not very Emmanuel, then, however perfect His work contrasted with any work of man, it is not divinely perfect. Hence, those who deny the essential deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, most consistently reject the doctrine of His atoning work. It cannot, with such denial, carry perpetuity with it: it is not perfect; it is nothing for the soul to rest on. On such a principle, Christ has died in vain. All the authorities in the world, “Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, were gathered together,” to compass the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; but now, the combination of the wisdom of the world, and of the religion of the world is against the true doctrine of the cross, the perfection of Christ’s work. The superstitious religionist, or the free-thinking infidel, vehemently opposed to each other, are agreeing in undermining the perfect work of Christ. How entirely is that work overlaid by the imposition of religious ordinances, as necessary to salvation; how entirely is it undermined by the assertion of human sufficiency. The very spirit of the age set on the obtaining a perfection not yet reached, is a virtual denial of that perfect work which God regards with infinite complacency, and which He commands to be proclaimed to man as the only basis on which He can meet man.

God sets forth this perfect work, “that men should fear before Him.”

The last stage of human wickedness is scorn. “Mockers” or “scoffers” characterize the last time of the present dispensation (2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 18). But this stage of wickedness is only reached after repeated contempt cast on the goodness and forbearance of God. It was so with Israel. What could God have done that He had not done for Israel; yet they only despised His goodness, “till there was no remedy.” “Wherefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people, which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. Therefore,

thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." It was thus God challenged the scornful men of old; it is thus He challenges the mockers now. Under the shelter of His forbearance and long-suffering, men have grown up to such a pitch of self-complacency and self-sufficiency, as to sit down in the seat of the scornful, and to deny their need of God to save them, or to make them happy.

Nevertheless, He still presents the perfect work of Christ to the judgment even of the scorners themselves, and not only challenges them to find a flaw in it, but whether there can be any work likened to it, by which at one and the same time, God is glorified and man supremely blessed; God's justice not only vindicated, but most illustriously displayed in the very act of pardoning a sinner; God's love to a sinner manifested in His hatred of sin. The work itself is so complete. in itself, that the moment it becomes the basis of a sinner's confidence, he finds himself at home with God, and that in His presence there is fullness of joy.

Let Christians see to it, that in this day of man's pride, their hearts are more than ever occupied with Jesus and His cross; and, instead of sitting in the seat of the scornful, let them sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word; and that is the better part which shall never be taken from them.

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How clear was the eye of the Lord as to the joy that was set before Him! How soon we shall be with Him, to know more about His sufferings and glory!

## Remarks on 1 Cor. 2

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Paul's rule of practice for the Corinthians, in the previous chapter, is his own in this. He there sought to lay low the setting up of man and its consequences, and here his own walk and practice correspond. God's rule is the reverse of man's. It is truly difficult for us to understand this. Into what human creed or imagination does it enter; viz., that in the things of God the wise, mighty, and noble, according to the flesh, have no place; or that the things which are weak, base, despised, and are not, are just those very things which God is pleased to use. Would that we ever remembered this; the result would be that our confidence in all that is human would vastly decrease, and our trust in God increase. Our weakness, instead of casting us down, would be rather be our confidence; for then we should find ourselves just where God is pleased to meet us, and to perfect His strength in our weakness. David refused Saul's armor, for he had another trust. Israel's king was cautioned against multiplying horses, wives, silver and gold (Deut. 17:16, 17). All God's deliverances were when man seemed to be at the weakest point; indeed, this is the principle of His grace: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." God will strip man of all that he esteems, that He may be all in all. He spake by ignorant and unlearned men. Peter was not ashamed to say, "Silver and gold have I none." How great was the power and boldness of these Galilean fishermen! Would that we had more of what they had, and less of what they had not!

In this chapter Paul lifts up the curtain, and plainly tells the Corinthians the secret of his strength. The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but mighty. He was determined, at all cost, not to know anything amongst them save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. All the Dagon's of the day must bow before the God he worshipped. He had tried his spiritual armor, nor would he use another. Like David, he was in weakness also: he had nothing whereon men could count for success. "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Had he used his natural weapons, he would have been as strong as they, or as any in the flesh were. (see Phil. 3). This he could not do, so long as his objects were a crucified Jesus, and that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (verse 5). He laid aside "excellency of speech," and "enticing words of man's wisdom" —Saul's armor—and clothed himself with the "armor of God;" so that his speech was "in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power." He came with wisdom and power, but they were from above, so unmistakably, that none could doubt their origin; they filled the vessel which God had sent for service and blessing.

Paul had declared among the Corinthians the testimony of God, and he would have them plainly to understand that he had done so by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. He inquired of them, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." If he had declared onto them "the hidden wisdom," "the deep things of God," how else could he have done so, save by the ministry of the Spirit? He only knoweth the things of God. Man's wisdom may declare what man's wisdom can receive, but "the things of God," no eye can see, nor ear hear. The Spirit that declares must also give spiritual sight and hearing. In a word, Paul would have the Corinthian saints to know that teaching,

receiving, discerning, and judging divine things, must all come from the Spirit of God. Without this, no matter how noble, wise, or learned we may be, we are fools in the school of God. The only teacher is the Holy Ghost, and none can understand Him save by His sovereign power.

Such, then, is the precious and needed teaching of this chapter. The first sets before us the operations of the cross of Christ on the fleshly pretensions of men, and as being also the power of God unto salvation. This sets forth the operations of the Holy Ghost as the only medium of communication between the soul and God.

## The Love of Christ Constraineth Us

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2 Cor. 5:14.

No time away the Christian idly throws;

It is a sacred trust—and well he knows

The service of his gracious Lord demands

A willing, grateful heart, and active hands.

Do worldlings ask, what motive thus can move?

We answer, it is love—constraining love

Of Him who for our souls a ransom gave,

Bled, Brewed, and died, and triumph'd o'er the grave.

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The precious blood of Jesus both waters and keeps down weeds.

A Short Meditation on the Names of Some of the Sons of Jacob

LET us remember Him who has surnamed us "Israel" (Gal. 6:16). We belong to Him who Himself is God's Israel (Isaiah 49:1-6). His First Born (Ex. 4:22; Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15). Well may we think, with solemn joy, on our Israelite-names, and plead them before the Lord; bowing the knee also to HIM whose NAME IS ABOVE EVERY NAME.

ISRAEL, a prince with God; a prevailing Prince "Reuben," (see a Son!) "Surely, the Lord hath looked on (our) affliction" (Gen. 29:32). "For unto us a Child is Born, unto us a Son is given... and His Name shall be called...The Mighty God" (Is. 9:6). "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). "The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power" (Gen. 49:3). "Let Reuben live" (Deut. 33:6). "In HIM was Life, and the Life was the Light of men" (John 1:4). "Our Life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). "Simeon" (that hears), "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17). "Hear ye Him" (Matt. 17:5). "Levi" (joined), "They shall be joined unto thee" (Numbers 18:4). "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). "Judah" (Gen. 29:35). "Now will I praise the LORD." "Gad," a troop (Gen. 49:19). I overcome "by the blood of the Lamb" "Asher," (v. 20,) I feed on royal dainties in "the high places." I suck (Jeshurun's portion), "the honey out of the rock," my food is butter of kine, milk of sheep, fat of lambs, with the fat of the kidneys of wheat (Deut. 32:13). Let us ponder and worship, and remember the Blessed One, our Asher, who has provided the feast at a wonderful cost, and so "let us eat, and" (with solemn heavenly mirth) "be merry," while we drink the pure blood of the grape.

Beloved, how is it that our vine is not the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; that our grapes are not grapes of gall, bitter clusters! Oh, beloved! how is it that our wine is not the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps (Deut. 32:32, 33); but that we are (as "Naphtali") "satisfied with favor, and fall of the blessing of the Lord" (Deut. 33:23); in a land of corn and wine, where the heavens drop down dew (verse 28); and as "Issachar," enjoying the rest that is good, and the land that is a pleasant land (Gen. 49:16).

Whether we labor in our fields, or journey through our land, we "bind" our "foal," not as do others in other countries, to posts and hedge trees; but "to the (abounding) Vine" —our "ass's colt to the choice Vine." We "wash (our) garments in wine, and (our) clothes in the blood of grapes." Let us meditate and pray over such a word as this (Gen. 49:12), "His eyes shall be red with wine." Drink abundantly, beloved. "Fat of my bread," saith the Lord, "and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Pro. 9:5).

The more we eat, the more we hunger; the more we drink, the More we feel our need. Beloved, where ever we are, in whatsoever way engaged, let our heart be with our Father and our Master, in the House of Bread and Wine. The voice of love will reach us, "Let US eat and be merry;" and no less this word, "Do this in remembrance of ME." Brethren, see the "royal dainties" on the table of the Blessed One in the House of Wine Let us abide with God at our LORD'S TABLE, over the "pure blood of the grape," over "the wine that cheereth God and man" (Judges 9:13),

(remembering Him who brought us to the Banqueting House), until our “eyes are red with wine.” We shall soon “see His face,” and “be like Him” (Rev. 22:4; 1 John 3:2).

We are the “Zebulon,” (v. 13,) to dwell where the storms, waves, and winds are. Let our eyes be red like, and red with wine upon the lees, well refined; and we shall brave the storms ourselves, and, under God, be a haven for ships in distress. “Joseph,” (v. 22), the “fruitful bough is by a well whose branches run over the wall.” There was One who grew and waxed strong in Spirit (Luke 2:40) and increased in wisdom, (and age, margin) and stature, and in favour with God and man (verse 52); who could always say, “Thou art near, O Lord.” Jehovah Himself was as the well, BY which a greater than Joseph was planted, whose branches run over the wall—precious clusters for us sinners of the Gentiles! Now we are His Joseph; He, our well The water that He has given us (John 4:14), is in us “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” That is the well whereof the Lord spoke.... “I will give them water.”.... “Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it” (Num. 21:18, 17)—the well-spring of life, the well-spring of wisdom, a flowing brook! Amen.

If God Be for Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

Rom. 8:31.

WHAT a word of life! What a weighty word among the many weighty words in the same chapter!

Was Judah against Joseph when he said, "Come, and let us sell him?" (Gen. 38:27). "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him and delivered him" (Acts 7:9, 10), and God was for him.

"THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH, and he was a prosperous man" (Gen. 39:2). Was Potiphar against Joseph, when he sent him to prison? God was for Joseph: God was with Joseph. That which he did, the Lord made it to prosper (v. 23). Neither Judah nor Potiphar can be against Joseph; they help him, through pit and prison, to be next to Pharaoh, over all the land of Egypt.

Was Haman against Mordecai, for plotting as he did? So far from being against that man of God, he labors hard for him, honors him, and is the means of his excellent prosperity, and dieth as a fool; while Mordecai is exalted.

Let us not forget that "WHATSOEVER a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Judah delivered himself a bondman to Joseph, whom he had sold to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:28-28; 44:33); and Hainan was hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

All this is of little worth, if it do not lead us to consider the Haman within, and the covetous Judah within, and "Jesus Christ the Son of God, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin;" and also to lay to heart the plotting against the greater than Joseph or Mordecai—the sorrows of the Cross, and the joys of Jesus at the right hand of God.

"Lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE AGE." (Precious indeed is the record!) "Amen."

By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them

MAT. 7:20

No creature's motives are to us reveal'd,
Like sap within the tree they are conceal'd:
But actions are of character a test,
Which all the wise have ever deem'd the best—
Words are but leaves, and will not serve alone,
'Tis by the fruit the tree is clearly shown!

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## Moses. Exodus 2-4

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THERE are two scenes in the early life of Moses which may afford us profitable admonition.

In Ex. 2 we see him under all external disadvantages. His soul has no help from without. He is in Pharaoh's court; and in the midst, as the apostle says, of the "pleasures of sin."

He is, moreover, as true a Nasarite there, as Daniel was in the court of Babylon. The scene around him cast him on his resources in God. He has to drink, all alone and in secret, of the waters at the fountain; for the land is dry and thirsty, with no grateful streams at all. But he flourishes: he is strong in faith, and stands in victory over the world.

This victory at first displays itself in him, by his refusing to be called or treated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11:24). This is an exceedingly beautiful notice of his faith. It lets us very much into the intimacies of his mind and daily walk among men. He was not ashamed, as it were, to own his origin and early history; the loathing of his person, cast out as he was in the day that he was born, and that all his goodly estate was through the adoption of a foundling by the king's daughter. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." This passage from Hebrews, suggests the thought, that he may have checked the servants and officers of the palace in their disposition to flatter him with his titles and distinctions.

This was indeed beautiful. This was above nature. This was victory over "the pride of life." This was a lovely instance of self-emptying, of making one-self of no reputation. This was precious moral virtue in the soul of one who is said to have esteemed "the reproach of Christ."

Then he went out from the palace, and looked amid the brick-kilns on the burthens of his brethren (Ex. 2:11). This was the second stage in his life of devotedness and single-heartedness, while he was in Egypt, and all external things were against him. "It came into his heart," we are told, to do this (Acts 7:23). And it is well, and the fruit is pleasant, when affection is the parent of service.

Such was the man Moses in the midst of Egypt and Egypt's temptations and hindrances. The place was barren of all help for a soul that walked with God.

Moses flourished there. In affection and service, in sympathy with the saints, and in triumph over the world, his standing and his course were beautiful.

But in process of time he is driven thence, and the outward scene entirely changes. In Ex. 3 we find him in the bosom of a happy godly household. He has his venerable father-in-law—a worshipper of God—his wife and his children, and he tends a flock at the borders of the mount of God. This was retirement in Midian to Moses, the contrast of the late scenery around him in Egypt. It was rather the Church than the world. He was now helped from without, instead of being hindered.

This is what we all experience at this time. Our external condition is for us. We are in the bosom of a family at the mount of God. We have got into easy Church circumstances. There are none to

make us afraid. But all this is not necessarily good. It is either good for us, or evil for us, according as it is used by us. Such atmosphere is either healthful or relaxing, according as we walk in it.

Moses so used it as to find it relaxing. He is not the man in Ex. 3 that he had been in Ex. 2. The contrast is very exact. He is invited to look on the afflictions of his brethren a second time. But he is full of reserve and reluctance—hard to be moved. And why is this? His brethren are the same—his own flesh and blood still—his father's children; and their burthens and griefs are just as heavy and severe as evert And beside, he has greater encouragement to look now than he had then. He has the sympathy of the LORD now with those afflictions of Israel, expressed, or conveyed to him, in the affecting vision of the burning bush. And he is invited into this holy service by the voice of the LORD from the midst of it.

Why, then, this reserve or reluctance? The atmosphere of Midian had proved relaxing. Egypt had presented difficulties, and he was wakeful, spiritual, and energetic, in the midst of them. Midian had afforded external religious advantages, and he had (insensibly perhaps) become easy and slumbering over an unfed lamp. The shifts and reasonings of unbelief, as well as the patient unupbraiding grace of God, may be strikingly marked in the communion of the LORD and His servant here. The first argument of the reluctant heart of Moses is drawn from himself. "Who am I," says he, "that I should go unto Pharaoh?" The insignificance and feebleness of his person, he assumes, pray to have him excused.

God answers this without a rebuke; but tells him that he may forget himself altogether, for that He will be with him.

Unbelief, then, draws its plea from the Lord, assuming, as it were, that there had been some indistinctness in the present divine manifestation. "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Gideon was in this mind in Judges 6:17; and the Baptist, in his measure, in Matt. 11:3.

But the Lord answers this likewise, without a rebuke, brightly revealing to His servant all the strength and goodness that awaited him, in the path He was now setting before him.

Moses is still slow of heart; and in the shifts of unbelief, draws his third objection from the people, saying to the Lord, "they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice" (Ex. 4:1).

Still does the Lord wait, unupbraiding; and gives signs and wonders, which shall constrain the people to receive him.

Can Moses be reluctant still? Yes; unbelief has resources still. He insinuates that all his present communion with the Lord had not profited him; but had left him just the man it had found him. "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou host spoken to thy servant" (Ex. 4:10).

Can the Lord be unupbraiding still? Yes; this personal slight and indignity, as we may call it, awakens no rebuke. "I will be with thy mouth," is the divine answer (ver. 12).

But, now, unbelief has no more acquirements. The weapons of its warfare have been foiled, the arrows of its quiver all spent. Naked, undisguised, unsheltered, inexcusable unbelief, the deep departure of the heart from the service of God, stands open in its shame. "O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send." Then, but not till then, the anger of the Lord was

kindled; and Moses may learn, in Aaron sharing the burthen and the honor with him, what unbelief had now cost him, and what he had lost by a heart slow and unready to wait on the Lord's business.

We know our own poor hearts too well to wonder at this, beloved, or to look at Moses alone in such folly.

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We should speak to our Father about our brethren and to our brethren about our Father.

“The Closet.”

Matt. 6:6

WHILST there is a very broad line, which all seem to recognize, between the holiness which becometh the house of the Lord, and the careless laxity of worldly morality; there is, nevertheless, much difficulty in following on “the narrow path which leadeth unto life.” The farther we advance the narrower apparently it becomes. “See that ye walk circumspectly—not as fools, but as wise—redeeming the time because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Such precept as this shows that there is difficulty, even in the very bosom of the Church, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing.

When one is brought to the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, there is an easy and natural severance from old associations, quite enough to make the world mark the change, and to “think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot.” But this cannot satisfy the renewed soul; it has its cravings, and finds these cravings in measure answered by the new association into which it is brought the Church of the living God calls forth its sympathies and interests. But even here there is danger, lest we only change one association for another, and do not recognize that, blessed as the fellowship of Christians is, it becomes degraded and spoilt if it be not taken as secondary to secret “fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.” There is a very strong social element in the Church of God, but in order happily to maintain it, there must be the “holding the Head” individually. It is by this means that “all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19). If there be not this individual “holding the Head,” the danger is lest we bring the natural social element into the Church of the living God, and degrade the Church into a mere human association. But there is another difficulty, and that is the maintenance of the domestic relationships of the private household, whilst we cultivate the maintenance of the relationships of the household of faith. Truth is necessarily divisive; “three of a house may be divided against two, and two against three, and a man’s foes be those of his own household.” And how very delicate is the line between that which truth strongly necessitates, and that which will may choose. “God has called us unto peace,” and there must be in the Christian a long training in the school of meekness ere he can be well assured that he is really taking the yoke of Christ, instead of casting off a yoke which may press severely, but which nevertheless “it is good for a man to bear in his youth.” It is the perfect One who said, “Whit ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” and then immediately went down to Nazareth, and was “subject” to Mary and Joseph.

But there are private households where the heads are believers, and whose responsibility is to make their households answer to the perfect pattern of the household of God, as it is presented to us in the Scripture, every one in direct responsibility to the Head, and yet at the same time mutually dependent on one another, and mutually helpful the one to the other. “Piety at home” is far more difficult than piety in the Church or in the world. There are restraints both in the world and in the Church, which are not felt in the private household. There is room in the private household

for the heads to act “after their own pleasure.” Hence it is we have need to get even from the privacy of the household to the retirement of the closet. When the Perfect Teacher is leading His disciples to the closet, He is strongly contrasting what one may do to satisfy the expectations of men, with that which is real before God, and comes out without effort before men.

“When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Fluency in utterance is not prayer; it may commend us to men, but not to God. Well says the wise man, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice is known by the multitude of words” (Eccles. 5:2, 3). As men generally distrust a great talker, so “in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin” (Prov. 10:19).

The closet is the place of secrecy and confidence. There are dealings of God with the soul there, and instruction imparted there as it is nowhere else. “That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops” (Luke 2:3). The Lord Jesus sought to His closet; “In the morning, thing up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). Saul the Pharisee, shut up in the house of Judas, with his eyes deprived of sight, was in his closet—“for, behold he prayeth” (Acts 9:11)—when Ananias was sent to him, and he received sight in his eyes, and liberty in his soul. Peter was in his closet on the housetop, at Joppa, when he had the wondrous vision, which made him understand that God was about to justify through faith in Jesus “sinners of the Gentiles.” (Acts 10). If there be the desire in the heart, there will be no difficulty in finding a place for our closet.

But let us come to particulars. The closet is the place where we find ourselves more immediately in His presence, “with whom we have to do,” before whom “all things are naked and open.” We are not hypocrites in the closet—we dare not (even if the very place did not of itself hinder it) act a pert. “Thou, God, seest me,” is the truthful expression of the soul in the closet. The thought of comparison with others is shut out in the thought, “Thou, God, seest me.” There may indeed be the transient feeling, as in the heart of Jacob in his solitariness, “How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” But the reverential sense of God’s presence made Bethel the place of hallowed remembrance, and dread was turned into confidence. “God Almighty appeared unto me at Luis, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me” (Gen. 48:3). The sanctuary was Israel’s privileged place of meeting with God, yet not without a certain sense of distance in approaching unto Him. There were many things which appeared to obscure the moral government of God in the world, which could only be solved by going into the sanctuary. (See Ps. 73). But the closet was not fully made known until the time came for the publication of the name of “the Father,” which One only could reveal, even “the Son.” We carry all the reverence of the sanctuary into the closet, but it is the Father with whom we have to do there. We are there in the secret place of the Most High, yet in all the confidence of children, These are exercises of soul which need the pity of the Father, and there they find their expression and relief. There are little and homely things which perplex, which need secrecy to mention, for which “the closet” is peculiarly suited. There are difficulties in the path of every Christian, for which he shrinks

from asking the sympathy of others, which press heavily notwithstanding; but the “Father seeth in secret.” It may be when the time of revelation comes, and we shall know even as we are known, that we shall discover that there have been more powerful secret, than prominent actors, in any great manifested blessing. For the Father who seeth in secret, rewardeth openly. David, in all his glory, was for three months without the highest blessing which his soul craved—for “the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months; and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom, and all his household” (2 Sam. 6:11). The private house of Obed-Edom was more blessed than the royal house of David. David knew that, and sought for the private household blessing, as that from which all other blessings should flow.

Justly may we mourn over the common declension of Christians. There is a great deal publicly said and publicly done, yet the line between real and nominal Christians is very indistinct. The light has become darkness; “the salt has lost its savor;” so that there is very general tolerance of all opinions, but no power of truth forcing itself on the consciences of men: This may doubtlessly, in a large measure, be traced to the lack of such boldness in testimony to the truth, which: makes the gospel and those who preach it to be “a savor of life unto life,” and “of death unto death.” But, assuredly, the lack of a practical bearing on the consciences of men by real Christians is, in a larger measure, to be traced to their neglect of the closet. The world, in its charity, readily gives credit for sin entity to the rear Christian, expecting the like charity in return, as if there was no such thing as truth: Christians help on each other in self-complacency by reason of party spirit—“measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,” instead of “considering one another to provoke unto love and good works.” We want the reality, the singleness of purpose, thy readiness of turning every thing to account, which mark the sagacious “children of this generation.” It is in the closet that we are real, stripped, nuked, and know for ourselves individually that Christ aint be our covering, our beauty, our only confidence, and only plea. It is there, in the presence of the Father, that we learn His preciousness to the Father, and can in our measure have fellowship with the Father in His delight in the Son. It is there that we justify God in His counselled wisdom in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is there that we learn our constant need, and constant dependence on His grace, and that He who is “our God is the God of salvation.” God is continually a Saviour-God; and, happy for us, “Jesus Christ is the mine yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” He is a God who “hath delivered, doth deliver, and will deliver.” It is in the closet that we find the needs-be of living by faith. Vague generalities will not suit the closet; there we are as individuals, and learn to say with the apostle, “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” We cannot forget in the closet, that we are sinners saved by grace alone through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We could not say there, “God, I thank thee I am not as other men are;” for, in the sacred enclosure of the closet, there is none to compare ourselves with save Hun in whose presence we are. But especially in the closet with the Father who seeth in secret, the exercised soul learns the blessedness of the hope set before it—for the hope is personal. It is not the vague thought of being exempt from trial, nor the equally vague thought of being in glory; but the thought of being with Jesus, seeing Him as He is, delighting in Him as well as adoring Him, without any hindrance or interruption. It is “looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

To come forth from the closet into the private household, would, without effort, exercise a wholesome influence there. Surely, the principle laid down by the apostle, that the believing husband sanctifies the unbelieving wife, may be extended more widely. And the private household would afford a sphere for manifesting that “to live is Christ;” that every act of a believer is, in popular language, a religious act. “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” “Piety at home” will ensure the behaviour which becomes the “house of God, the Church of the living God.” It is the same principle in the one and the other, subjection and mutual dependence. And according to this order, the end proposed by the apostle might be reached. “Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:14-16).

If our aim reach no farther than to meet the expectations of men of the world, or even of real Christians, we may “have our reward,” but we are not approved to the Father who seeth in secret. He requires truth in the inward parts; and if the essence of Pharisaism is to appear before men, what we are not before God, the essence of a Christian is that he is of the truth, a doer of truth, one in whose spirit there is no guile, who learns in the closet the two most opposite things, the depth of his degradation and hopelessness of his condition as a sinner before God, and yet the height of his exaltation as well as the security of salvation in Christ. He will there learn that he is nothing, and there alone learn to be content that others should esteem him to be nothing, because God has made him all that he can desire to be in Christ. The Christian who is most familiar with the security, life, and honor which he has in Christ, will find humility to be his most fitting garb. He will be “clothed with humility.”

One special privilege of the closet is, that it is open to all, so that all stand on equally privileged ground when there; the weakest believer is there on an equal footing with the most honored apostle. The apostles felt their need of the closet when they made provision for others “to serve tables,” that they might give themselves “to the word of God and to prayer.” And it is well for those who publicly minister to see that “the study” does not lead them to neglect “the closet.” But the closet is the place of effectual service to others, for those who are not called into publicity in the Church. Surely, if those who esteem themselves the meanest and weakest Christians were more in their closets, praying to the Father who seeth in secret, there would be many an open answer to their prayers in manifested blessing. The apostle Paul knew the value of the closet, when he spoke to the Ephesian Christians, not only of their defensive armor, but of their offensive weapons, “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.”

It is indeed truly comforting to our souls to know that we have the sympathy of others in their prayers for us. And if the Apostle could tell the Philippians, that they were constantly remembered by him in his prayers, was there no recompense, no return of prayer for him on their part, that he might be assured of their sympathy?

The corruption of the great professing body is marked in this very respect. They have sanctioned an official class to pray for them, and then gone another step downward to look to this class to pray instead of them. What is the remedy? Let each member of the body of Christ know that he is

of use to his fellow-members of the same body; and know that the most honored sphere of service is that in which he realizes his highest relationship. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Remarks on 1 Cor. 3

THIS chapter teaches us that God is the true source of blessing, and that there is no other. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Well might the apostle inquire of the Corinthians, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" Well might he say, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours." Paul could not speak to the Corinthians "as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." His letter finds them in the same state, "For ye are yet carnal."

When the glory filled the Tabernacle and the Temple there was no room for any thing else (Ex. 40:34; 2 Chron. 5:14); no place for the flesh; no room for glorying, save in the glory that filled the place. The Corinthians, by setting up man and human headships, delighting in elements foreign to the Cross, became carnal. To be spiritual is to be a debtor to God for everything, to hold all in subjection to Him. Then the bondage and terror of man cease, and those fleshly elements of his, that captivate the senses, lose their enticing power. This is our high calling, to honor the Cross at any cost. To acknowledge no teaching but that of the Spirit of God; and no other source of divine power but that of the Living God.

Such is the substance of the Apostle's teaching in the three first chapters of this epistle; and such is the instruction needed now, as well as then, to save the Saints from those things which charm their senses and exclude God. Our only safeguard is to keep our eyes so fixed on Jesus as to be able to say with godlike liberty of soul,

"We ask not, need not, ought beside;

So safe, so calm, so satisfied!"

The Sorrows of the Lamb of God on the Cross, Contrasted With the Path of the Sheep

THE Psalms present to us a mass of most blessed truth, of which we only find small portions in other parts of the Word of God; namely, the experiences of our blessed Lord— “the fat of the kidneys of wheat” “the fat that covereth the inwards.” God has in His marvelous grace allowed us to look into the deepest sorrows of His beloved Son. He has admitted us into fellowship with Himself, even in the most holy things; things which alone met His eye, and reached His ear: the secret breathings of the Lord unexpressed in audible words—the unuttered groanings of His Spirit on the tree have been recorded for our blessing. We are thus enabled, in some measure, to estimate that which surpasses all value—the costly price at which we have been redeemed. We shall find also that every true joy, every lasting blessing which we possess, has been purchased by the groans, and tears, and precious blood of the Son of God. In the following pages an attempt has been made to contrast the deep sufferings and sorrows of Christ on the cross, with the full and peaceful portion of the believer, purchased by those very sufferings. The 23rd Psalm has been selected as one descriptive of the blessings pertaining to the saints of God, and of so rich a stream of faith, and mercy, and goodness. In a parallel column, passages from other parts of scripture have been arranged, so as to render the contrast more apparent. The blessed Lord, as the Lamb of God, doubtless Himself experienced the joys and comforts of the 23rd Psalm. Jehovah was His Shepherd; and, as “the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father,” in what green pastures must He have rested—what waters of quietness must He have tasted! But in order that we might be sheep of the same pasture—children of the same Father—what deep and unsearchable billows of wrath rolled over Him on the cross! Another column of texts might however have been added, telling us at the same time of His faith and strong confidence—His trust in God in the midst even of that deep mire where there was no standing. All is wonderful that pertains to Him whose name is “Wonderful!” May we read and meditate, and worship whilst we read, and thus get joy and strength from this bread of life, this pure blood of the grape, this refreshing drink that God has given us “as out of great depths:”

The pathway of the sheep, under the care of the Great and Good Shepherd, to the house of the Father. | The sorrows of the Lamb of God on the Cross, conflicted by Jehovah, and endured for the sake of the sheep. |

1. “The Lord is my shepherd;

| “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” (Zech 13:7).

“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isa. 53:7).

“It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief” (Isa. 53:10).

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"I shall not want.

|"Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36).

"But I am poor and needy" (Psa. 40:17). "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy (Psa. 86:1). "I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness" (Psa. 109:22-24).

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2 "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

|"Thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psa. 22:15). "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. . . I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass" (Psa. 102:3-6, 9-11).|

"he leadeth me beside the still waters.

|"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psa. 42:7). "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. . . . Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me" (Psa. 69:1-2, 14-15). "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves" (Psa. 88:6-7). "For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (Jonah 2:3).

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3 "He restoreth my soul:

|"Lord, why castest thou off my soul?" (Psa. 88:14). "But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed" (Psa. 88:38). "He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. . . .And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lam. 3:12-13, 17-18).|

"he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

|"thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53:10). "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. . . He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that

I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. . . . He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate” (Lam. 3:2, 5-7, 9-11).

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4 ”Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

|“The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me” (Psa. 18:5). “My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me” (Psa. 55:4-5). “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. . . . Save me from the lion’s mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns” (Psa. 22:14, 21). “Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions” (Psa. 35:17). “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? . . . O my God, my soul is cast down” (Psa. 42:5-6). “My soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. . . . Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. . . . I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off” (Psa. 88:3-4, 6, 15-16). “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow” (Psa. 116:3). |

“for thou art with me;

|“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? . . . Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. . . . But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me” (Psa. 22:1, 11, 19). “Why hast thou forgotten me?” (Psa. 42:9). “why dost thou cast me off?” (Psa. 43:2). “Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me” (Psa. 38:21). “why hidest thou thy face from me?” (Psa. 88:14). “How long, Lord? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?” (Psa. 89:46). “Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight” (Jonah 2:4).|

“thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

|“I Am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath” (Lam. 3:1). “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . for the transgression of my people was he stricken. . . . it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. . . .” (Isa. 53:5, 8, 10). “My heart is smitten, and withered like grass” (Psa. 102:4). “The Lord hath chastened me sore” (Psa. 118:18). “smite the shepherd” (Zech. 13:7). “Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psa. 69:20).

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5 ”Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

|"How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psa. 13:2). "Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?" (Psa. 41:5). "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" (Psa. 42:9, 10). "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. . . dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Psa. 22:12, 13, 16-18). "He is a reproach to his neighbours. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice" (Psa. 89:41-42). "I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me" (Psa. 31:11). "Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Psa. 102:8-9). "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psa. 69:21). |

"thou anointest my head with oil;

|"thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. . . . Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame" (Psa. 89:38-39, 44-45). "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down" (Psa. 102:10).|

"my cup runneth over.

|"I am poor and sorrowful" (Psa. 69:29). "I am a worm, and no man. . . My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws" (Psa. 22:6, 15). "Horror hath overwhelmed me" (Psa. 55:5). "He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood" (Lam. 3:15).

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"6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

|"My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. . . . My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. . . . He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days" (Psa. 102:3, 11, 23). "The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame" (Psa. 89:45). "Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day" (Lam. 3:3).

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"and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

|"Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off." "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall" (Lam. 3:54, 18-19). "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever" (Jonah 2:6). "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear

before God?" (Psa. 42:2).

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"His glory is great in thy salvation: honor and majesty hast thou laid upon Him. For thou hast made Him most blessed for ever: thou hast made Him exceeding glad with thy countenance" (Psa. 21:5, 6).

Some Remarks on the Parables

WITH the exception of some in the gospel by Luke, the mysteries, or secret things of the kingdom of heaven, are disclosed by these portions of the Word. There is no direct mention in them of the blood of Christ and the grace of God. We cannot, with exact correctness, say of the Parables, these are the glad tidings which are to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, in the name of the Lord Jesus—that Gospel which is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

They are the teachings of Jesus as the Prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15-19; see also Ps. 78:1, 2), and as the Son of Man (Matt. 13: 37, 38).

Of old, when wickedness and ruin rose to their height in Israel, and every ordained link between them and Jehovah their God, such as laws, statutes, judgments, priesthood, kingship, failed to maintain the relations He had been pleased to form with them; He interposed by the testimony of prophets; and whilst judging by His words in their mouth all that was evil, disclosed the resources of His unchanging grace, and the end He had still in view for their blessing. As soon as people, priests, elders, rulers, scribes, pharisees, sadducees, and wise men, had one and all risen up against Jesus as presented to them “a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers,” we find that He takes the place of Prophet, instructing the willing-hearted and His disciples; and bringing forth in His testimony, not only as a Scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven things new and old, but also things hidden from the foundation of the world.

An humble reverent meditation of the Word, with prayerful waiting upon God, will enable us to see plainly in these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which our Lord disclosed by similitudes or parables, the two points: what belong to His words as the “Prophet like unto Moses,” and what belong to them as “the Son of Man.” We shall not confound things that differ, however close their connection may be; nor carry beyond their full and just meaning these divine revelations, into what yet remained to be spoken and declared through other channels, the disclosure of which waited for other circumstances.

If I connect Deut. 18 and Ps. 78, bearing in mind the character of the former, both when and why delivered to Israel by Moses, what manner of testimony also for God and against them it contains, I see how the Lord’s own place is foreshown, for Moses was but a servant in all that house, for a testimony to things which should be afterwards spoken—a poor figure, an imperfect shadow—for we find Jesus in these Parables not only as Prophet and Servant, but also as King; and more than that, fulfilling what goes beyond the bounds of Israel, even all that is connected with Himself as Son of man.

Concerning the kingdom of heaven, from the days of David and Solomon throughout the Psalms and the Prophets, it had been discoursed of, and yet not in all its bearings, in its inward and outward, its spiritual and material constitution.

“The Prophet” like unto Moses brings out things new and old, things bidden in the letter of the scriptures, and yet revealed in the letter— “The Servant” was, if it were possible, to raise up the tribes of Israel. “The King” would be owned in His kingdoms. “The Son of man” honored in judgment. All these are combined in the Parables and much more. I do not say the unsearchable riches of Christ, in the mystery of His person, hereby directly come forth, though everywhere He is to be seen and adored.

Nicodemus: The Samaritan: The Multitude

John 3, 4, 6

To apprehend the light or truth of the Lord is needful to our safe conduct through the scene around us; but to discern His spirit, His tastes, habits of thought, sympathies and aversions, all pure and perfect as they were, so many expressions of the divine mind, gives elevation to our conduct.

Something of His sympathies and aversions may be discovered from His different method with Nicodemus, the Samaritan, and the multitude, in John 3, 4, 6.

There is this common purpose in all these scenes—the Lord is pulling the soul upon a sinner’s ground.

This, however, is done in a different method in each case; and in this different method His spirit, His taste, His sympathies or aversions, as we have expressed it, manifest themselves.

Nicodemus was “a master in Israel,” a religious “ruler of the Jews.” He was of the Pharisees, one therefore of a party that had set itself boldly against Jesus. But at this time there was evidently some working of conscience in him.

He comes to Christ as a pupil, to learn lessons and mysteries. The Lord transfers him from that ground, and puts him under the uplifted Serpent—that is, instructs him to come to Him as a bitten Israelite, or as a poor sinner that needed life.

He does this, as we might say, shortly or at once, stopping him at the first utterance of his lips. But withal patiently, and with evident interest in him personally.

The Samaritan woman was one of the thoughtless children of the world. Life and its enjoyments and occupations were all to her. She was shrewd, and a woman of a good understanding, and, as far as that led her, not ignorant of the religion of the day. But life in the world was her object. She was on the ground where the common fallen nature had put her. She had not, therefore, sought the Lord, like Nicodemus, but one of the ordinary circumstances of human life had thrown them together.

Such an one, I may say, was just the one for the Son of God. He meets her, therefore, in her place, and speaks in her own language to her. But from that place, without rebuke, without abruptness, He removes her on the ground of a convicted sinner, and then reveals Himself to her.

She had not assumed a place as the ruler had; and Christ allows the whole passage from darkness to light to be made more rapidly. The same occasion witnesses the whole journey, as it does not in the case of Nicodemus. The Lord at first only turns him towards the right road.

The multitude are distinct from both. There was no working of conscience in them, as in Nicodemus, nor were they simply on the ground, or in the place of nature, like the Samaritan. They were in the religious activity of the day, and were making their profit by it. They followed Jesus,

“not because they saw the miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled.” They followed Him for what they could get.

Such a material is very offensive to the mind of Christ. Nothing more so. But He does not at once cast it aside. He can bear with anything in the patience of His grace towards sinners. He does not, therefore, cast the multitude aside, though they did thus form a material so repulsive to Him. He was decisive and yet patient with the Jewish master. He was leading the poor Samaritan from first to last, without a strong or relenting word—and now in a long discourse He strives with the multitude, and would fain put them on paschal ground, or in the place of sinners who needed the life of His flesh and blood, evidently, however, throughout with a mind much averted from the place and character in which they were showing themselves, and begins His answer to them rebukingly (6:26).

How perfect in patience and grace, and yet in the various expressions of taste and of sympathy, all these ways and methods are! But let me say, there is no joy like that of learning our lessons from the Lord in the place and character of sinners, that place which the Lord is putting us all into, ere He will teach us any thing.

Peter was on that ground to which the Lord was here either turning, or seeking to turn Nicodemus, the Samaritan, and the multitude (see 6:62, 69). His soul dealt with Jesus as its life—that was the true apprehension, the apprehension of one who stood in the place, to which the drawings of the Father always lead.

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year unto you” (Ex. 12:2). The beginning of the year was changed, to let Israel know, that their life was not the life of creatures, but of ransomed sinners, that eternity with God is to be spent in that character. The passover was the moment in this history, when they formally entered on that character, being then sheltered from destruction by blood sprinkled on the door posts. And, therefore, that moment was made the beginning of the year to them.

The early chapters in John’s Gospel, as we have now seen, have this object—to show how the Lord put all those who came to Him on the ground of sinners. He would receive them (whether Nicodemus, the Samaritan, or the multitude) only as sinners. None others really came to Him.

I ask, was not this the echo of Ex. 12:2? Was not this a telling of them, as they had already been told by that ordinance, that they must begin as poor sinners?

Most happy for our souls is it, to see, and see so clearly, this way of the Lord. He cannot welcome us, if we bring not our sins with us, if we come not as to a Saviour.

Hymn

Composed old sang by a dying saint.

Praise the Lord, for He is glorious;

Never shall His promise fail:

God hath made His saints victorious,

Sin and death shall not prevail.

Praise the God of our salvation:

Hosts on high His power proclaim.

Heaven and earth and all creation,

Land and magnify His name.

The Ear and the Tongue

Sin has caused misery, confusion, and disorder in the creation of God. "It groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." So pervading is the disturbing power of sin, that there is no organ of the body which distinguishes man from the brute, and no faculty of the mind but what is misused or misdirected. In the natural order, hearing necessarily precedes speaking. In one born deaf, the tongue cannot be used intelligently. The same word in the Greek is rendered deaf or dumb according as the context may require. The tongue and the ear are very distinguished organs of man. The tongue is said to be his glory. "Awake up tray glory, awake psaltery and harp." It is with the tongue we "bless God." "All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee; they shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom." All God's works, intelligent and unintelligent, must eventually praise Him; for "He has created all things, and for His pleasure they are and were created." But the tongue of the redeemed is exercised in intelligent praise, in blessing God, in performing the function for which it was given to man. The redeemed are thankful to God, and "speak good of His name." "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."

But just in proportion as the tongue in its legitimate use is the glory of man, so is it in its misuse the evidence of the desperate wickedness of his heart. "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God: out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." Nature itself cries aloud against such disorder. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?"

There are three special characteristics of the tongue as "an instrument of unrighteousness unto sin." 1st. It is the great instrument of deceit and flattery. Of the perfect One alone can it be said, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." But in reference to others, even to those who had the light of revelation by the law, this is the solemn verdict, "There is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness, their throat is an open sepulcher, they flatter with their tongue." (Comp. Ps. 5. and Rom. 3). Such flattery and deceit, ever since the Devil himself, the father of lies, said, "Ye shall not surely die," has been one mark of false prophets and false teachers. The Prophets prophesied "lies," "deceits," "smooth things;" and the people loved to have it so. They said, "Peace, where there is no peace." "They daubed the wall with untempered mortar," so as to appear safe, and suddenly involve all under it in ruin. They "sewed pillows under all arm-holes," bolstering up people in self-complacency, and at the same time making the hearts of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad. "Much fair speech" is the characteristic of the harlot of the Proverb, "enticing" to destruction the passer-by—true picture of the harlot Church with her "sorceries" and fair speech, saying in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow."

The tendency to flatter with the tongue was betrayed even by one who appeared candid and sincere (Mark 10:17-22), "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus

said unto him, Why tallest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." Flattering words were used as a cloak for the wickedness of the heart, when the Pharisees sent to Jesus their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither rarest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness." Whilst the Spirit speaketh expressly that there would arise those who would "speak lies in hypocrisy,"—awful characteristic of priestly assumption in forgiveness of sins—for such speak lies in hypocrisy, knowing that they are not doing that which they affect to do—there are those who, "by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple."

Men may flatter God, even as Israel of old. "When He slew them, then they sought Him, and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless, they did flatter Him with their mouth; and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him; neither were they stedfast in His covenant." Man may flatter his fellow man; but the wisdom of God gives solemn warning, "He that goeth about as a tale-bearer revealeth secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." "A flattering mouth worketh ruin." "A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet."

"A man may flatter himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." But the time is coming when "God shall cut of all flattering lips;" for nothing can be more opposed to the truth of the Gospel. There is necessarily a piercing power in truth. "The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." God, by the word of His truth, "tears" in order "to heal," "smites" in order "to bind up." By the word of His truth He upsets self-complacency, in order to make the soul only satisfied with Christ. The Apostle used not "flattering words," as his converts well knew. He did not corrupt the word, in order to make it more palatable to human passions and prejudices, "but as of sincerity, but as of God in the eight of God speak we in Christ." We are admonished to speak "the truth in love," and "he that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue."

Secondly, the tongue is that instrument by which the hatred of the heart towards God, and the heart's defiance of God, is frequently manifested. It is indeed "a little member," but it is "a world of iniquity;" "it setteth on fire the whole course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." It is that member of the body, for which man demands there shall be no restraint. "The Lord shall cut of all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things; who have said, with our tongue will we prevail; our lip are our own; who is Lord over us?" It was with the tongue, for he could go no further, that the proud Assyrian set at defiance the living God. "Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice;....even against the Holy One of Israel." So again one characteristic of the little horn in Daniel is thus given, "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the Horn spake." So of the Beast in the Book of Revelation, it is written, "There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." Man had his hour given to him, and he crucified the Lord of glory. No such hour will ever be again allowed to him; he has been able to vent his malice against God in putting to death His servants, but Jesus is on high, and the impotent rage of man against Him can only be shown by

his words,—but “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” The tongue, however through education it may be used to conceal the thoughts of the heart, is often, in the off-hand expression, so truthful an index of what is passing in the heart, as to carry with it the moral certainty that we know what is passing there. It was thus that Jesus convicted the Pharisees of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. They said, “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.” This was blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This drew from the Lord the cutting reproach, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” And then He adds, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” The last days are characterized by “scoffers walking after their own lusts.” However conventional decency may restrain man in the presence of his fellow, yet when godliness elicits ridicule, or provokes the contemptuous expression, light as persons may set by it, there is the idle word so true an index of the real state of the heart before God; that by such words condemnation is sealed on those who use them.

Thirdly, the tongue is the chief instrument whereby men express the proud thoughts of their heart, however impotent they may be to carry them into effect. “The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.” It is the characteristic result of false teaching brought into the Church (2 Pet. 2), that men would “speak great swelling words of vanity,” promising “liberty,” unrestrainedness either by God or man, as though man were all-sufficient to keep himself, save himself, and make himself happy. So again when “the grace of God” is turned into the license of human will, “they speak evil of dignities” — “speak evil of those things they know not,”—and like their prototype, Borah, contradict both the Priesthood and Lordship of Jesus, in asserting the self-sufficiency of man. Of “the Beast,” the last recorded form of man’s wilfulness before the judgment, it is written, “There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things.” It is manifest from his words, what the intention of man is. “He hath done great things;” and talks of doing greater; and as he goes on he asserts, at every step, his independence of God, till at last he openly defies God and the Lamb. But God “scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” They may do great things, but the word is, “Fear not, the Lord will do great things.” When men said, “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth;” God scattered them. “When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” “How much she hath glorified herself.... for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day.”

God joins issue with man in terrible judgment upon the ground of the boastful arrogance of his tongue, as well as the daring wilfulness of his deeds.

It is not the tongue to speak that men need, but the “ear to hear;” and never will the tongue be used aright for the glory of God, until there be the ear to hear. “Let every one be swift to hear, slow to speak.” Men have inverted the divine order and coveted readiness of speech, although the ear be deaf to hear. All would be talkers, few have patience to hear. The sorest judicial act ever inflicted by God on Israel was leaving them with “ears dull of hearing.” It alarmed the Apostle as to

the Hebrew converts, lest there should be a turning back unto perdition, because they were “dull of hearing.” The eye might be blinded, the ear deafened, and the heart made fat; but the mouth was left untouched to tell out their real condition; “your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath uttered perverseness.” And when it pleased God to open the eyes of one to see His glory, the confession was, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Is. 6:5).

If the tongue is to be retrieved to the glory of God, we must begin with the ear. This is the divine order. Jesus Himself thus speaks, “The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened Mine ear and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.” The whole of the humiliation of Jesus, in obedience to the will of Him that sent Him, is expressed in the words, “Mine ears hast Thou opened.” “Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will O God; yea, Thy law is within my heart.”

Men still desire the tongue of the learned; they confess that they have inability to express themselves, and wish they could speak as others of Christ and His salvation; but they are ignorant that the thing lacking is the obedient ear.

When Moses received commission from the Lord to deliver Israel out of Egypt, he saw all the difficulties in the way of the people receiving him, and Pharaoh listening to him. Among other difficulties, he pleads, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” Moses was ignorant that the thing needed was the ready ear. And the Lord said unto him, “Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord. Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.” If Moses had the tongue of the learned, it must be by having his ear wakened to hear as the learned, else the doctrine is the doctrine of Moses, and not the doctrine of God. When God would speak to Israel by the youthful Samuel, the obedient ear gave to him the tongue of the learned. His call of God, was answered by Samuel, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” Solemn was the message he had to deliver to the aged Priest of the Lord, his kind and honored patron; but Samuel’s mouth was opened with humble boldness, and he “told Eli every whit, and hid nothing from him.” But the divine order is seen most clearly in the Perfect One Himself. “As I hear I judge, and My judgment is just, because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me,” Again, when the Jews marveled, saying, “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.” And then He adds, that true learning and ability to speak it can only be acquired in the same school.” “If any man will do His will (has the ready ear) he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself,”

Satan from the outset gained access to man’s ear. He is the “whisperer that separateth chief friends.” And so entirely is Satan in possession of the ear of man, that though the Lord Himself be the speaker, and grace and truth, mercy and peace the subject, man has no ear to hear what the Lord saith. “Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word.” The ear is preoccupied; every false prophet can find ready access to it; it is open to every idle tale, and

only closed against the message of God. The ministry of the Prophets was to turn the ear to listen to God. "Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live." "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his Messenger, rising up betimes and sending, because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: but they mocked the messenger of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." Subsequently He sent His Son, and this was His message, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My words and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." But such marvelous words fell upon deaf ears; men were "like the deaf adder that stoppeth his ears, be the charmer never so cunning," even the Lord of glory Himself. Jesus as The Prophet, as the full Revealer of God, and Expounder of the thoughts and ways of God; was thus announced to Moses,— "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." Moses and Elias appeared on the Mount of transfiguration with Jesus, but they entered into the cloud, and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him; and when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." The ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself was to retrieve the ear to God. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." But he had again to complain, as when He said, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "But My people would not hearken to My voice, and Israel would none of Me;" or in His own words at the close of His ministry, "If any man hear My words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

The Apostles had to reiterate the Prophet's complaint, "Who hath believed our report?" And the closing word of the Apostle to Israel was to rivet on them the fearful denunciation of the Prophet, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand." And then he adds, "Be it known unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." A mighty result was produced by "the heating of faith." But in process of time professing Christians lost the ear to hear what the Lord Himself said. "The time will come, (says the Apostle, and we live to see his word verified) when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Hence, when the Lord addresses Himself to priestly judgment of the Churches in the Book of Revelation, He has to get the ear to hear His message. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." When the description is given of the Beast and his actings in Rev. 13 the notice is given, "If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear." No cultivated intellect, no moral advancement is proof against the delusive power of the Beast. "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear."

Little do men think where the defect is. God's almighty remedy for human misery, and His certain way to present and eternal happiness is addressed to the ear. It was deafness, so characteristic of the state of Israel refusing to hear His voice, that drew the sigh from Jesus, when he said, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened" (Mark 7:34). And when He most severely rebuked the unbelief of

His own disciples, it was to class them with the multitude round them, "Having ears, hear ye not?" (Mark 8:18.)

What solemn truth do we find in the aphorism of the wise man. "The bearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them." The change is not less wonderful indeed, when God has arrested the ear of one, be he ever so thoughtless, than actually unstopping the ear which has been naturally deaf. That ear hears God speaking peace.. It has never heard such music before—all that it heard before left the sense of unsatisfiedness, for "the ear is not satisfied with hearing." Like the believing Samaritan, the ear would say, "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." The verse or chapter known by rote, and vainly supposed to be understood, now strikes the ear with thrilling interest. It is as it were the chief organ of the awakened sinner, awakened in his ear to hear as the learned; for "the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat." It is discord to that ear to hear of human wonders. It is able to detect, however unable to explain, that doctrine which does not honour Christ, and its safety is in turning away from it. "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." We dare not presume on our ability to detect the false doctrine and to refute it,—our safety lies in not putting ourselves in the way of hearing any doctrine which tampers with the doctrines of grace. The Scripture speaks "of doctrines of devils and seducing spirits," and much which naturally pleases the ear or the imagination comes from this source. But if Satan can no longer pre-occupy the ear which God has opened, he casts every impediment in the way of our hearing to purpose. Sometimes he boldly catches away the word, so that it entirely "slips" from the memory; thus he allows us to be satisfied with a momentary impression. Then he brings in some besetting hindrance which may choke the word and render it unfruitful. If it be important to take heed "what we hear," it is equally so to take heed "how we hear."

On Prosperity

IT requires more grace to bear prosperity in a right spirit than adversity; one is apt to ensnare—the other humbles us, and teaches us self-knowledge. When all is going on smoothly with us, and we are sitting quite at our ease, we scarcely feel that we are pilgrims and strangers upon earth, and are seldom so earnest in seeking a heavenly inheritance. In prosperity we often slide into a spirit of conformity to the world almost imperceptibly. Many a Christian who has stood his ground boldly against the frowns and persecutions of the world, and passed through deep affliction in safety, has been won by its smiles in the time of prosperity, and brought either to deny his Lord, or has sunk into a state of deadness and lukewarmness of soul. Peter, who zealously stood up for Christ in the garden of Gethsemane in the face of the Roman soldiers, denied Him while sitting at ease by the fireside in the palace of the high priest! How pure and unblemished was the character of David during the days when he watched his father's sheep, and when he suffered from the bitter persecution of Saul! But when he was exalted to the throne of Israel, when he exchanged the shepherd's crook for the kingly scepter, and the humble tent of Jesse for the princely palace, he fell into those sins which caused him to water his couch with tears, and the remembrance of which embittered his future days. Oh, how much mercy there is in the failings of the saints being recorded! If they were set forth as perfect characters, we might indeed be discouraged, and almost ready to despair, when we feel our corruptions strong and our enemies so numerous and powerful. If we read that the father of the faithful lied—that the man after God's own heart became an adulterer and murderer—that the bold apostle, who was so ready to go with his Master to prison and to death, yet so shamefully denied Him—what lessons of humility and watchfulness should it teach us! What tenderness towards our backsliding brethren! when we remember that we are liable to the same temptations, and that it is by grace we stand, and by grace alone that any are kept through faith unto salvation.

Words of Truth

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” (Gal. 4:19.)

“Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not?” (2 Cor. 11:29.)

“We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 John 3:16.)

“If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35; see 10:31, and Matt. 20:27.)

If these “true sayings” were more on our consciences and hearts, what power we should have to serve the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood! (Acts 20:28.) When I look at a saint, what do I see?

A son of God. (1 John 3:1, 2.)

A member of Christ. (Eph. 5:30.)

A part of myself. (Rom. 12:5.)

A temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 6:19.)

A living stone. (1 Pet. 2:5.)

The workmanship of God. (Eph. 2:10.)

May we all have the mind, heart, and bowels of Christ, about His own, about that, and those, which are His.

On the Sympathy of Jesus

EXALTED to His Father's glorious throne,
Both heaven and earth His high dominion own:
And there as our High Priest He intercedes,
Our feeble prayers accepts—His merit pleads.
No angel could a sinner's trials know,
Or truly sympathize with human woe;
The Glorious God-man Abraham's seed hath worn,
In flesh and blood, our griefs and sorrows borne—
As man He wept, and suffer'd here below,
And still as man He pities all our woe;
Not only as my God my grief can view,
But, as a tender Brother feel it too!
And though the Saviour's glory now is great,
He hath not changed His nature, but His state;
And still He bears that gracious heart I see,
That on the bloody cross was pierced for me.
Saints may with Jesus all their cares confide;
He lives to plead for those for whom He died.

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THE "NEW COMMANDMENT" (John 13:34) How searching it is, as well as helping! "As I have loved you," is at once the measure of its wealth and its authority. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." What words! All the love of Christ for us, is also obedience to His Father. Our love to one another, is obedience to Christ. He who so loved us did always those things that pleased God. What a mine is here! What holy love! How inseparable those two words—God is light and God is love!

## God's Way and Our Way

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"His way is perfect." "He maketh my way perfect."—Psa. 18:30, 32.

How good to know, that whatsoever way He has recourse to, to make my way perfect, His way is perfect in wisdom, grace, faithfulness, love unbounded. Sometimes, in the perfection of His way, He "gently leads;" sometimes "He speaks out of the whirlwind" but it is He who speaks; it is He who leads; and whether in storm or calm, He leads, He speaks whose "way is perfect."

How perfect "His way" in our salvation! Could we have bettered it? We had nothing to do with it, and we know it is well we had not. We have nothing to do with the means of making our "way" perfect, save to wait on God for increase of faith and grace. We might, very probably, have mercy on our ways, when God, having mercy on us, has no mercy on our inventions. Were it not for the trials which God in His grace sends, who can tell what trials we should bring on ourselves?

I am a crooked one; and, to fit me for the Master's use, I need crooked circumstances. They come, and He who makes my way perfect completes the dove-tail work, and He will plane and polish for His own glory. Ah, beloved! we hear it said, "How deeply the Lord is trying my faith." A little self-searching before God's all-searching eye would end in our saying, "How deeply I have been trying my Heavenly Father's love." What we all need is to wait on God for grace to look more to Jesus THROUGH THE WORD, to Jesus our blessed Lord and Exemplar whose way was perfect indeed, and yet who was dealt with as if He were the sinner. How He bore "the contradiction of sinners against Himself," and the wrath of God! Let us dwell in the sunshine of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and mark the manner of His submission to His heavenly Father's will. Let us prayerfully meditate on Him as He is revealed in the WORD or LIFE, from the page which records His power in the creation of all things (see Gen. 1, John 1, Heb. 1,) through the records of the sorrows of His cross, and the glory of His resurrection and ascension; remembering His intercession until He come with clouds, according to His word, "Surely I come quickly!" (Rev. 22:20.)

Thus dealing with the Word, we may humbly and adoringly expect that THE COMFORTER, who is the Holy Ghost, will instruct our souls in the blessed truth, that all things work together for our good—that "tribulation worketh patience," that "the God of patience and consolation" is our God, that patience is to "have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." He will make our deepest, most enduring affliction "light affliction," and show us that it is but "for a moment"—that it "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The Lord needed not our help before time dawned, to settle His decrees concerning us; and He needs not our help now as to means to bring His decrees about. His means may be, to our eye, crooked, or they may be straight; to our taste, bitter or sweet; His way to our feet may be rough or smooth;—but "His way is perfect;" and He says, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Happy he

who by the Spirit of God has been taught, through the Word, not to strive against God, for that “God is greater than man” (Job 33:12, 13), that “God can do everything” (Job 42:2), that “without Him we can do nothing” (John 15:5); but that we “can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.”

Let us, as the redeemed of the Lord—redeemed with “precious blood”—serve the Lord with gladness. Let our business be to walk before God. In His grace He will show us His way; He will make us to rejoice in it; He will teach us what grace through Jesus we have found in His sight, and we shall know something of the greatness of His power which worketh in us (Eph. 1:19, &c.; 3:20, 21; 6:10), both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Oh! may we then come to God as those who “believe that HE IS;” seek to please God, not ourselves; and get the testimony that Enoch got! (Heb. 11:5.)

Whatever be God's way with us, our wisdom is to “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him;” to “delight” ourselves “in the Lord;” to “commit our way” and “works” to Him (Ps. 37:5; Prov. 16:2, 3); to “trust in the Lord,” who “undertakes” for us—and in His own perfect way “performs” and “perfects” that which concerneth “those who trust in Him, and who desire to know and do His will.” “Teach me Thy way, O Lord!”

If by the Spirit of God we are given to meditate on Jesus in the “evening, morning, and at noonday;” and if we consider that Jesus Christ the Son of God—the Living and True God—is the Living Way to the Father, the gift of the Father to and for the Church, and that the Church is the gift of the Father to Jesus, shall we not also be assured that God will with Jesus freely give us all things? Things present are His gift, whatsoever be their form or color—painful or pleasant—as well as things to come. Whatever the “present things” may be in the way of circumstances from our heavenly Father to us-ward, for His glory and our blessing, if we are as well assured (well indeed we may be) of His infinite wisdom in the means He employs, as of the infinite wisdom of His eternal counsels, the word which it is impossible for flesh to utter, “Thy will be done,” will flow from the soul without effort, by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost; who comforts us, while He proves to us that the will of God is “good, and acceptable, and perfect;” teaching our souls that it is impossible for God to err because “His way is perfect.” He is bold and strong in faith who says, “Thy will be done.”

Drink of the Wine of the Kingdom, “drink abundantly, O beloved,” saith the Lord; eat of the Living Bread, and God will give us, through the Bread and the Wine, all needful boldness and strength. It is true “His way is in the sea, and His path in the deep waters, and His footsteps are not known;” still, He leads His people “by the right way,” like a flock, with a shepherd's hand and heart; and His sheep, who have redemption before their eyes, and the price thereof in their hearts, know that “His way is in the sanctuary;” and viewing the sea from the sanctuary, through, the rent veil, they know that waters that affright those who are on the wave without God, tend to the cleansing of those who are with Him in the sanctuary. They sing the song of adoration, “The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee; they were afraid, the depths also were troubled;” but “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” The deep sea of our troubles (to the praise of the glory of His grace let it be said) becomes very shallow, when, by the Spirit, we contemplate the way of Jehovah with Jesus “in the sea;” the path which Jesus had to take “in the great waters,” in

the “darkness,” “in the deeps;” when the “fierce wrath” of the Lord God of His salvation went over Him (Ps. 88); when He said, “Thou art holy”.... “I am a worm” (Ps. 22:3, 6); when His strong cry was, “Save Me, O God; for the waters are come in unto My soul.... I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow Me” (Ps. 69:1, 2).

When we drink of the cup which Wisdom has thus mingled, we are as giants refreshed with new wine (God makes us so)— “as a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.” If we eat and drink more abundantly, shall we not be stronger in faith; able to subdue our inward corruptions, as well as wax valiant in the wrestle against the principalities, and powers, and wicked spirits in heavenly places? Shall we not escape the “edge of the sword,” and stand against their wiles, which deepen, greatly deepen, as “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh?” The song of praise on our journey to our heavenly city— “To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood” turns to flight armies of aliens, who in their own land oppose us. “By Thee I have run through a troop, by my God I have leaped over a wall. As for God, His WAY IS PERFECT. (In the sea and in the sanctuary, His way is perfect!) THE WORD OF THE LORD IS TRIED (REFINED, see margin), He is a buckler to all them that trust in Him. For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength, and MAKETH MY WAY PERFECT.” May the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## The Cross of Christ Is

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The Scourge to evils that would occupy Christ's place in our hearts;

The Heavenly Sentinel, to keep enemies from entering;

The Sword, to pursue and vanquish the mightiest foe;

The Bread and Wine, to cheer and sustain in the fight;

The Lever to our Father's house;

"The Balm of life;

The Cure of woe;

The Measure and the Pledge of LOVE!"

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TAUGHT OF GOD.—There is all the difference between hearing by the ear and seeing with the eye, as Job says; and the teaching of a school, even though it be the truth itself, and the teaching of God. "They shall be all taught of God" is a grand promise indeed; for Israel yet future, but made good now to us, in that He leads us to Jesus as the truth—the living truth, the embodied truth — "Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me." Is it not generally true that a school of doctrine leads us to glory in men, the teaching of the Holy Ghost of the very same truth to glorify Christ?

Brotherly Love

THE thing to promote brotherly love is love. The unchanging law from the first is, “herb and tree yielding fruit after his kind” (Genesis 1:11). Corn bears corn, and nettles produce nettles. And just as surely love bears love, and pride produces pride. So let us seek to sow broadcast after the Blessed Pattern, who fell into the ground and died, that He might yield fruit after His kind. One thing that may mar this is impatience, expecting fruit too soon. I have seen this in my children, and have felt it in my own experience. I expect fruit before its time, or fruit of a kind too high, not seeing how God accepts “the good smell” of the “tender grape,” while it is yet sour (Song of Sol. 2:13). Any one can see that the image of God, when it comes, is “very good” (Gen. 1:27, 31), when the new man created in righteousness rules the whole creature; but the thing is to be like God, to see what is good in brethren from the fruit, and when any light has come, to see with God “that it is good” (Gen. 1:4). That verse in Acts, where we are told that when Barnabas went to Antioch “he saw the grace of God” in them, has been of use to me. He saw the grace of God, for he saw with the eyes of grace— “he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost”—and good men yet see grace, even when it is in the bud, where carnal and proud souls only see the flesh in some poor weak brother. Let us thus seek the things which edify, duly estimating what is of Christ in each other: so shall the body be united rather than torn asunder.

“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God.”

Mnason of Cyprus, an Old Disciple

Acts 21:16.

CYPRUS, a considerable island in the Mediterranean Sea between Syria and Cilicia, was renowned in heathen story for its fertility so as to be called the happy island; but it was also sadly renowned for the profligacy of its inhabitants. But even to the inhabitants of this island the grace of God appeared and was made effectual to the sheaving forth that, in all cases where it is received, it “teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

The first mention made of a disciple of the country of Cyprus, is the honourable testimony to “Joses, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles’ feet.” But there were early in the Church other disciples of the country of Cyprus; for we read, “Now they that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus: and the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21). The disciples of Cyprus were thus among the first to preach the Lord Jesus, outside the Jews.

When Paul and Barnabas were specially selected by the Holy Ghost, for the work of carrying the name of Jesus among the Gentiles, they immediately “departed” from Antioch to Selucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. They visited the two chief cities in the island, Salamis and Paphos, and their ministry was no less strikingly marked by the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Roman deputy, than by the infliction of blindness on Elymas the sorcerer.

On the occasion of the humiliating breach between Barnabas and Paul, two servants of the Lord sent forth on a common work by the direct appointment of the Holy Ghost, “Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.”

On Paul’s last eventful visit to Jerusalem, after he and his companions had landed at Caesarea, “they went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Musson of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.” The generous love for the truth which had wrought in Barnabas of Cyprus to sell his possession for the good of others, was evidenced in Mnason by his willingness to be the host of the Apostle and his companions in travel. But the distinctive notice of Mnason is, that he was “an old disciple,” in reference not merely to his age, although that would necessarily come in, but to his being one of the early converts, who had “continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine.” He knew it to be a high honor to lodge them. His value for the truth had not subsided as he advanced in age, and he

had not been led to trim the doctrine of Christ so as to make it more compatible with the world or worldly religion. He had respect to “the old paths, where is the good way, and had walked therein.” He had known no improvement in the doctrines originally taught by the Apostles. Doubtless, he had witnessed the rise of many novelties in his, time, and seen many turned aside, and, then recovered; but all these things were turned to account by one who knew Christ to be both the teacher and the doctrine of God, and had learnt to call no man master on earth; for one is our Master, even Christ.

It may be thought but a poor notice of an individual, that he was “an old disciple;” but one of the most common, and at the same time sorrowful trials to the Apostles was the readiness of their disciples to give heed to novelties. “Continuance” marks the “ways” of God (Is. 64:5), instability those of men. In those described in the parable of the sower, both the stony and the thorny ground hearers appeared promising for a while, but there was no “continuance.” Those represented by the good ground bring forth fruit with patience. On one occasion a sudden impulse seems to have come over the Jews, as Jesus taught in the temple. “As He spake these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:30-32). Their seeming faith speedily passed into angry wrangling. Gracious indeed were the words of the Lord to His weak, wavering and ignorant disciples, “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations” (Luke 22:28).

How the heart of the Apostle dilates with gladness, when he writes to the Philippians, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” There were others to whom he had to write in a very different tone. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Gal. 1:8). To the Thessalonians the Apostle writes not only with thanksgiving, but to show how much his soul was wrapped up in their patient continuance in well doing. He says, “For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” In a similar strain, the aged John writes both to the elect lady, and to Gains. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Such expressions give an interest and meaning to the notice by the Holy Spirit of an “old disciple.” Of all “the names written in heaven,” very few comparatively are recorded on earth, but among them is “one Mnason” —apparently an obscure individual— “unknown, yet well known.” His characteristic is, “an old disciple;” his service, hospitality to the ministers of Christ.

“An old disciple” is one who “continues in the things which he has heard and been assured of.” In hearing Christ preached, and by the grace of God receiving the testimony, he has laid hold of “the truth.” He has already before him in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ an object of the highest interest. “The Lord is his light and his salvation.” To this test he brings everything. He weighs all human pretensions in this balance. However high men may aspire, he finds that, weighed in this balance, they are lighter than vanity, and that their boasted wisdom and righteousness shrink into insignificance, when set side by side with Christ, the wisdom, righteousness, and holiness of God.

The old disciple has witnessed many novelties in his day, and in all probability has been in some measure ensnared by them, or entangled in them. There is something so plausible and fascinating

in pursuits which have the alleviation of human misery, moral or physical, for their object, that Christians often engage in them actively, without any suspicion that the honor of Christ may be compromised. For wherever Christ is not decidedly and avowedly the object, the believer will sooner or later find himself "unequally yoked." But all these things turn to him for a testimony as to the impossibility of serving God and mammon. If the continuous effect of man is to contradict the truth of God, as to the reality of the condition of man that he is a lost and ruined sinner, "without strength," and "ungodly," the continuous effort of Christians has been to achieve the impossibility of making the service of the world compatible with Christ. To this end Christians have "labored in the fire, and wearied themselves for very vanity;" and instead of finding Christ, their object, advanced by the attempt, they have invariably found themselves outwitted by the exaltation, not of Christ, but of man.

In the affectionate and paternal Epistles of Paul to his own child in the faith, Timothy, there are several intimations of too great a readiness in Timothy to disputation, rather than "continuance in the things which he had learned and been assured of." The conscious possession of the truth in the knowledge of Jesus, as a standard by which to test everything, is a prominent mark of an old disciple, whilst restlessness of enquiry and proneness to dispute is often the snare of the young disciple. The Grecian tendency, as manifested in the Athenians (Acts 17), "to hear or tell something new," has always had its place in the Church of God, and been the danger of those not well grounded in the faith. The old disciple, having his soul occupied with Christ Himself, will find neither heart nor opportunity for discussing each novelty as it presents itself. There is one great safeguard to prevent the old disciple being carried away by any existing topic of the day. It is not his province to discuss the truth of any new theory, but he is in possession of a summary process to dismiss many things which are of absorbing interest to others. They are "rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Their tendency is to make the Christian who meddles in these things practically to let go the Head, so that however humanly exalting these novelties may be, they really end in degrading Him; for is not any human attainment degradation when put by the side of being "filled to the full in Him," "in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily?"

Much of the tuition of an old disciple has been in the most difficult school, that of unlearning. The Apostle Peter speaks of redemption by the precious blood of the Lamb, as redemption from his hereditary and traditional religion. But neither that Apostle nor any of his followers have found it an easy thing to emancipate themselves from hereditary and traditional religion. "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better." "To know Him that was from the beginning," is the characteristic of a father in Christ; and he has made no little proficiency in the school of Christ, who has discovered that He is "the Omega" as well as "the Alpha," "the last" as well as "the first," "the end" as well as "the beginning." An old disciple finds that the first truth that beamed on his soul, even the glory of Christ and the perfection of His work on the Cross, is so comprehensive and wonderful, as not only to be his study here, but that it will be his study throughout eternity. He has been unlearning many things which were of interest in their "time and season," in order to learn Him, through many an anxious exercise of soul, whom he looks forward to learn perfectly in glory. "That I may know Him," is the suited prayer of the old disciple. An old disciple has learned not "to glory in men." This is by no means an easy lesson. Many who are thoroughly distrustful of their own hearts, have to learn the difference between the Master and the choicest of His servants. The Lord never disappoints, but is always better than our expectations.

We raise our expectations from man to a great height, and then comes some painful disappointment; but our hope from the Lord never makes ashamed. To expect nothing from ourselves, and not to reckon on others, but to expect everything from the Lord must necessarily require time and experience. And happy is he who thus turns experience (always painful in itself) to account, in that it works hope, and such “hope that maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.” According to this rule, the old disciple is encouraged to expect every thing from that God who has manifested His love in already giving to him the greatest and all-comprehensive gift of His Son. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”

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EVIL REPORT AND GOOD REPORT.—If we are what we are called to be, “as lights in the world,” the evil or good report will no more move us than the thoughts of men affect the course of stars above. Through night and day, they keep the path appointed to them; whatever names or notions men may invent for them, they are above it all, because they are in heaven, and yet shining for the guidance of those on earth. There may we abide, having our conversation in heaven, not falling thence into the tumults or contentions of this sinful world: if we so fall, we know the effect of fallen stars—the waters are made bitter. May the Lord preserve us to His praise. In His hand alone are we in safety.

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The Lord sometimes humbles us more than we reckon on, that we may the better learn of His Spirit to humble ourselves, that He may exalt us in due time.

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Moses, the “faithful” servant, said, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” (Ex. 32:26.) Jehu, the zealous servant, said, “Who is on my side?” (2 Kings 9:32.)

## A Comparison and Contrast

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Between the Sacrifices, Priests, and Holy Places under Me Law, and the One Sacrifice, the One Priest, and the Heavenly Places connected with the New Covenant; as set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

### THE SACRIFICES UNDER THE LAW.|THE ONE SACRIFICE.|

Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins (Heb. 10:11).|This man offered one sacrifice for sins for ever (Heb. 10:12).

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Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices (10:11).|This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, SAT DOWN on the right hand of God (10:12). When he had by himself purged our sins, SAT DOWN on the right hand of the majesty on high (1:3).

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It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (10:4).|Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (9:28).|

The blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh (9:18.)|How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (9:14).|

The priests had to offer daily; the high priest yearly sacrifices (10:11; 7:27; 10:1).|Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (9:28).

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The high priest entered every year into the holiest, with the blood of goats and calves (9:7, 12).|Christ entered in once by his own blood (9:12).

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### THE HIGH PRIEST AND PRIESTS UNDER THE LAW.|THE ONE PRIEST.|

A high priest taken from among men (Heb. 5:1).|Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee (Heb. 5:5). Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever (1:8). Jesus the Son of God (4:14).|

Compassed with infirmity (5:2). High priests which have infirmity (7:28).|The Son, consecrated for evermore (7:28).

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Had sins, infirmities, and errors (7:27; 5:2, 3; 9:7).|Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (7:26).|

Fitted by reason of infirmity to have compassion on others (5:2).|A merciful and faithful high priest (2:17). Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered (5:8). In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (4:15). In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted (2:18).|

Of the order of Aaron (7:11).|Of the order of Melchizedec (7:11).|

Of the tribe of Levi (7:5).|Of the tribe of Judah (7:14).|

Made without an oath (7:21).|Made with an oath, by Him that said unto him, The Lord aware and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec (7:21).|

Made after the law of a carnal commandment (7:16).|After the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:16).|

Many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death (7:23).|But this one because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood (a priesthood that passeth not on in succession from one to another); wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (7:24, 25).|

Priests on earth (8:4).|A great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God (4:14).

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THE HOLY PLACES UNDER THE LAW. |THE HOLY PLACES ABOVE. |

A worldly sanctuary, and a tabernacle made (9:1, 2). |The sanctuary, and the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man (8:2).|

Holy places made with hands, the figures of the true (9:24).|A greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building (9:11). Heaven itself (9:24).|

THE WORSHIPPERS UNDER THE LAW.

|THE WORSHIPPERS UNDER THE NEW COVENANT. |

Were sanctified to the purifying of the flesh (9:13).|By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Christ once for all (10:10).|

Never made perfect as pertaining to the conscience (9:9).|Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (10:22)|

The worshipper never purged (10:2).|When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high (1:3).|

Never made perfect (10:1).|By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (10:14).|

A remembrance again made of sins every year (10:8).|Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more (10:17).|

Sins never taken away, and therefore sacrifices constantly offered (10:11).

|Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin (10:18).|

|SO GREAT SALVATION. |

No perfection by the Levitical Priesthood (7:11).|Christ the author of eternal salvation (5:9). He obtained eternal redemption for us (9:12).|

The Law made nothing perfect (7:19).

|They which are called receive the promise of eternal inheritance (9:15).|

|A better covenant (8:6).

A better testament (7:22).

Better promises (8:8).

Better sacrifices (9:23).

A better substance (10:34).

A better country (11:16).|

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“CONSIDER HIM.”—I find the mingling of the remembrance of Jesus with matters to be very good in many ways. Rather, indeed, it should be that we always remember Him; and so matters, as they occur, will mingle with the remembrance of Him. Thus it should be: for the small matters should find us occupied with the larger, and so be lost in it in due time. I find it is by no effort of mine, by no desire of mine, that this can be accomplished. God, I believe, gives me the desire, and I pray to Him to accomplish it; namely, that we may have a true continuous remembrance of His Son Jesus our Lord, whether the Bible be before us or not, in our going out and coming in, alone or in company, with friends or foes. It is the Holy Spirit’s work to bring Jesus to our remembrance. The more we have in our hearts the remembrance of His having tasted death—the death of the cross for us—the more we enjoy the foretaste of the glory which is to come, and rejoice in the Lord with “joy unspeakable,” which is our present portion (1 Pet. 1:8)—the portion of those whom God quickened together with Christ, whom He has made to sit together in heavenly places in Him (Eph. 2:1-6).

Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 1-4

THERE is much interest attaching to the person of this great Gentile. The place he occupies in the progress of the divine dispensations, the circumstances which connect him with the saints of God, and his own personal history, all contribute to give him a place in our recollections, and to read us some holy and important lessons.

He was the man in whom God set up the Gentiles. The house of David, the throne of Judah, had corrupted itself, the measure of the people's iniquity was full, and the term of the divine long-suffering was spent, in Nebuchadnezzar's day; and he is used by the Lord to be the rod of His indignation against Jerusalem, and the hand to receive from Him the sword of rule and judgment in the earth.

The glory had departed. It had left the earth. The prophet had seen it in its gradual and reluctant, but sure and judicial flight on the cherubim and the wheels, as far as the mountains on its way to heaven. But though "the glory is departed" might have been written on Jerusalem, "the glory is here" could not be correspondingly written on any seat or city of the nations.

This Chaldean, however, this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, is set up by the Lord, and the sword is committed to him. Power in the earth for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well, is put into his hand, formally put there by God. on the glory forsaking the earth, on the Lord for the present refusing to take His place as king of Israel.

This is Nebuchadnezzar's connection with the dispensational purposes of God. He was glad, of course, to extend his dominions, and let his conquests be known far and wide, and Jerusalem is welcome plunder to him; but all the while he was filling out the purposes of God.

At length his sword is in its sheath, and we see him, not in connection with the purposes, but with the saints of God; and then we get a more personal sight of him, and a subject of still holier interest and meaning. For then we see the man under divine operation, and not merely the power under divine commission and appointment. And it is this sight which Daniel gives of him in these chapters.

The tumult of war being over, and the sword, as I said, in its sheath again, the king is seen in his palace at Babylon. His royal estate he purposes to set off to all advantage. Elegancies, and accomplishments, and provisions of all sorts shall fill his courts. Both his greatness and his pleasures shall be served by all that conquered lands can furnish, and the ancient land of the glory is now only one of them. Babylon, famed for its wisdom in its astrologers and soothsayers, shall be set off by some of the captive youths of Judah distinguished for their understanding science, and skillfulness in knowledge. This is the first chapter.

As it often happens, the Lord comes to disturb him. His heart is moved, if not his estate and condition in the world. Ere he went to sleep on one much-to-be-remembered night, he is thinking

on what was to be hereafter. He then sleeps and dreams, and the dream being all about what was to be hereafter, shows that the hand of God was in the whole scene.

The king, however, does not understand any thing of all this. Even the dream itself goes from him. He has no remembrance of it. It leaves uneasiness behind it, but that is all.

Often is it thus with the soul. There is a disturbance, but no intelligence. A restlessness has been awakened, but whence it came is not known, or whither it goes (what is its purpose) is not conjectured. And it is too high for man. It is the hand of God, and mere man cannot reach it. All the wisdom of Babylon is at fault. The dream—the departed dream—which had left only its shadow to scare the heart of the king, is beyond all Chaldean art.

This is beautifully significant. We live amid these wonderful shakings, these operations of God with the hearts of the children of men. And when it is with the elect, the work thus begun is conducted to a blessed issue.

The man of God, however, gets into the secret. The saint is made to know the mind of God in this great operation of His hand. Daniel tells it all to the king.

Nebuchadnezzar is, naturally, moved to wondering admiration. The knowledge of the prophet is marvelous in his eyes, and all that he can do for him he is ready to do. The wisdom of the God of Daniel he also religiously acknowledges, and, under the excitement, even delights in it.

This is the second chapter.

But with all this, he is but Nebuchadnezzar still, a mere child of nature, the sport of human passions, and of the devil's wiles. Vanity seems to feed on the communications which the prophet of God had delivered. Wonderful but natural. These communications had dealt with solemn truths; that an image was to be broken in pieces and made like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor. But this is all passed by the heart of the king, and that he himself was the head of this image, the golden head of it, is all that practically works on him. His pride can get food out of that, and the rest may remain for a future day, however awful it may be.

Accordingly, he sets up a golden image for all to worship. All orders and estates of men are summoned by musical instruments of all sorts to own the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Marvelous that our hearts can so deal with God's revelations! God had spoken-of an image being broken to pieces, and scattered like the chaff before the wind; Nebuchadnezzar can set up an image to be honored with divine honors by all the world! How falsely the heart traffics with divine truth! We turn to the present account of our own vanity what connects itself with the most solemn of all realities!

Admiration of God's wisdom will not do. Nebuchadnezzar had that. But with that, he was a self-worshipper, and to himself he can sacrifice every thing. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the very instruments for awakening that admiration, shall burn in the fiery furnace, if they consent not to fall down before this image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Wonderful infatuation!—God however is but again displayed. If wisdom belong to Him, so does power. If He can reveal secrets and make known the thoughts of the head upon the bed of the children of men, He can quench the violence of fire, and save every hair of the head from perishing, though in a burning fiery furnace.

The king is again moved. And he does more than before. He had honored the servants of the God of wisdom already, now he is for honoring the God of power Himself, establishing His name in the land, and making reverence of Him a part of the business of the state, a standing ordinance of the realm.

But what of this? He is, as before, only Nebuchadnezzar still, the haughty, self-pleased, self-pleasing child of dust, man who, like Adam of old, would be as God. For after these witnesses of divine wisdom and power, and after the motions which his heart and conscience had thus passed through, he was as in earlier days, “At rest in his house and flourishing in his palace” (4:4). He was the same self-pleased, self-pleasing, important king of Babylon.

Nature outlives a thousand checks and improvements. The new wine poured into the old bottles is but spilt. “We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.” The various melody of the dispensations of God are lost in the dull ear of man.

But the Lord is not weary. He can still sit at the well and talk with the sinner. He shakes the heart of this king with another dream, and Daniel again interprets it.

It is still, however, the new wine in the old bottle, and is spilt as before. Twelve months after this solemn visitation, the king walks in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and his poor proud heart, after all this, can say, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty” (4:30).

Here surely is old Nebuchadnezzar still, the “old man” of nature. The divine revelations are spent on him in vain. All the goodly emotions are but as the morning cloud and early dew. The new wine, to be preserved, must be put into new bottles.

And so, at last, it is. Nebuchadnezzar is made a new bottle. Deeply and solemnly is this process conducted, and this work accomplished. The sentence of death is awfully laid on him. The case is one of great character. And it might well be so, because, as we have seen, the light of the wisdom of God and the hand of the power of God, had already addressed this man, and the further care and diligence of the Lord had been, in the recent dream, also bestowed upon him; but all to no real purpose. The new wine had been spilt again and again. Nebuchadnezzar is the same man still, and the old bottle is cast away; the former vessel having been marred in the wheel, the lump is now taken into the Potter’s hand, to fashion it another vessel, as it pleases Him.

The story of this operation, as I said, is solemn indeed.

“Man that is in honour and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish.” In honour, indeed, Nebuchadnezzar had been, but he had not understood, and now he becomes as a beast. “He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws.”

Thus he is made to know himself, and to learn the lesson that he was, in all his honour, as brutish as the cattle of the field, having no understanding.

The occasion was special, and the display of the operation of God signal almost without a parallel. But if he learn that "he has destroyed himself," he shall learn also that there is One that lifts up even from dunghills; and under the further working of His gracious as well as mighty hand, Nebuchadnezzar revives. He becomes a risen man in due season. The field and the oxen are left His understanding returns to him, his kingdom and its glory, his honor and its brightness, his nobles and his counsellors, all return to him, and even excellent majesty is added to him. And then, as one of understanding indeed, who had come to the knowledge of God and himself, he no longer thinks of honouring God by state decrees and ordinances of his realm, but bows before Him as Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, and publishes His doings. He is no longer the king, but the dependant. The old thing is passed away, and all is become new.

The Overseers of the Holy Ghost

ACTS 20:28.

WE are all losers by reason of tradition having made the word of God of none effect. It is as much part of our redemption, in the age in which we live, to be redeemed from our “vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers,” as it was for the Jewish believers to be redeemed out of their hereditary and traditional religion through the precious blood of the Lamb (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). But there is danger lest in seeking to emancipate ourselves from tradition we throw aside that which is really valuable, because it is scriptural.

Episcopacy has been so generally known in its traditional character of prelacy, that many in repudiating prelacy have also with it thrown aside episcopacy, as if it had no scriptural foundation. Our duty is to separate the precious from the vile, and to recognize every gracious provision which the Holy Ghost makes for the present well-being of the saints.

“This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). It is an honorable work; for its high pattern is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. “Ye were,” says the apostle, “as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Pet. 2:25). The Shepherd and Bishop, although having one common object—namely, care for the sheep—are, nevertheless, to be distinguished in their functions. If the Lord Jesus presents Himself to us in all the gracious characters of the Good Shepherd (John 10), we find Him exercising the no less important functions of the Bishop in His inspection of the Churches. (Rev. 2, 3).

Sheep not only need green pastures and still waters, but diligent inspection also, lest there be disease among them; as disease in one sheep, if not checked, might infect the whole flock. “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Prov. 27:23). Tender care and suited teaching, together with “vigilant” inspection, would be found in one whom the Lord had gifted to be, under Himself, a shepherd and a bishop. But these qualifications are not always found in the same servant of the Lord. The ready detection of any departure from the faith, or of any attempt to corrupt it—the detection of an evil principle at work, before it is manifested in its results, are truly valuable qualifications; and yet they may be unaccompanied with that truly shepherdly characteristic to strengthen that which is diseased, to heal that which is sick, and to bind up that which is broken, and to bring again that which is driven away, and to seek out that which is lost (Ezek. 34:4).

Among the gifts of the ascended Jesus for the building up of His body, the Church, “pastors and teachers” are linked together. (Eph. 4) “Apt to teach,” is also one of the needed qualifications of a bishop, but it is not the only qualification, and may be found where other qualifications of the bishop are wanting. Many of these qualifications are moral and circumstantial, of which those without are quite competent judges, Sobriety of demeanor, not addicted to wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, not passionate, and being at the head of a well-ordered household (see 1 Tim. 3), do

not require a spiritual judgment in order to be recognized. But a great deal of the truly shepherdly character can only be appreciated by those who are spiritual, and often finds its exercise among individuals at home, rather than among the congregation in public. If the Lord in mercy gives pastors, He gives them according to His own heart, to feed His people with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15). But in Israel the accredited pastors—those who made pretension to be so, and those whom the people acknowledged had scattered the flock—they had “become brutish and sought not the Lord” (Jer. 10:21; 23:1-4). It was so again in the days of the Lord Jesus Himself. He came to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” there was an accredited fold and accredited shepherds; but the fold was no place of safety for the Lord’s sheep, so He put them forth from it, and pronounced the most withering woes on the accredited shepherds; and then assumed that blessed title Himself. Jesus, the Lord of glory, feeds His flock like a Shepherd: He gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young (Is. 40:10, 11). We learn from Jesus Himself, “the good Pastor” and the true Bishop, what would be according to His heart; whom love led both to “lay down His life for the sheep,” and to counsel, rebuke, and chasten them, in their diseases, wanderings, and lukewarmness (Rev. 3:18, 19). If it be according to the heart of Jesus to, unite in the same individual the pastoral and episcopal qualifications, so as to relieve and help one another, how gladly should we accept what He graciously bestows. But to “every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ;” and we are equal losers, if we recognize not all that Christ is pleased to give; or, if any presume, because one gift is manifest that therefore another is present. This is the way of office, but it is not the way of Christ. In the parting address of the apostle Paul to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, he pointedly addresses them as Bishops, yet at the same time recognizes them as called upon to tend the flock. These elders were “stewards of the manifold grace of God”—among them doubtlessly some were more apt to teach than others, some more qualified to rule, others more able in meekness to instruct and to sympathize with the sheep in their wanderings and trials. But “all are yours,” says the apostle; and the flock would be losers if they did not profit by all as their several circumstances might require. Now, the assumption of office, on the one side, and the appropriation of a teacher to oneself, or to a congregation, on the other, has tended to hinder this gracious provision of the Shepherd and Bishop being carried out for the blessing of the flock. The Church at Philippi, in the absence of immediate apostolic superintendence, flourished under that of bishops. The provision at Philippi was not a bishop, but bishops; and in this plurality we may safely conclude that vigilant inspection and tender pastoral care were alike secured to the Church at Philippi, as the both were secured to the Church at Ephesus, by the gracious provision of the Holy Ghost. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, [i.e., bishops,] to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). It is the way of man to merge the individual into the official character, and to demand a respect for the office apart from the personal qualifications of its holder. But this is not the way of Christ. There the sense of individual responsibility to the Lord, the exercise of conscience towards God and man, the tasting and valuing personally the doctrine taught to others (see 1 Tim. 4:16), is the very soul and power of ability to help those who have believed through grace. “Take heed to yourselves.” It is by personal exercise of soul before God, that one is made useful in counselling or comforting others in their soul-trials. It is this feature which distinguishes gift in the Church from office in the world. We are bound to acknowledge “the powers that be,” irrespective of their moral qualifications; but it is disobedience to Christ to

recognize anything like office in the Church in the absence of the qualifications which are plainly laid down by the apostle. (1 Tim. 3). The assumption of office in the Church has generally led to usurpation over the conscience of others, whilst the gift of the ascended Jesus ever brings with it a sense of direct responsibility to the Lord the giver. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

It is to all the flock that the apostle directs the attention of the bishops whom he addressee. He knew how rapidly the entrance of an evil, trivial in itself, would spread; and therefore every individual believer ought to be regarded as a member of the one body of which Christ is the Head. Again, the exercise of their episcopacy was to be in the recognition that it is as the Holy Ghost who had qualified them, and set them in so responsible a position—such a consideration would tend alike to quicken diligence and hinder usurpation. They were also to feed, that is, tend the Church of God; vigilant oversight was to be tempered with shepherdly tenderness. There are cases in which sharp rebuke is needed; but for the most part reproof, rebuke, and exhortation, should be "with all long-suffering." But, above all, the value to God Himself of that which was the object of their attention and oversight must never be lost sight of. "It is the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." If this thought were kept before the soul, it would tend to make the bishop attach a far higher value to that which he tended, than to himself or to his service.

The same outline is given also by the apostle Peter in addressing elders in his Epistle. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight, [that is, exercising episcopacy,] not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Here, first we notice, that the care and oversight of the flock of God is so honourable a work as to be desirable for its own sake, and by no means to be regarded as a burdensome duty. The yoke of Jesus is easy, and His burden light. It should therefore be undertaken, "not by constraint, but willingly." The apostle then warns against two dangers, and in this case, as well as others, the warning itself has been prophetic of the corruption which would ensue. Greediness of gain and lordship over the conscience—yea, even the bodies of men have been the prominent features of the false episcopate of the corrupt Church. The Chief Shepherd went before the flock to point out the way, and give them an example; and, with their eye on Him, the under shepherds should be patterns to the flock, waiting the time when care for Christ's sheep should be made manifest as the most honorable of employments. The gain and lordly honor of the false episcopate pass away, but the crown of glory that fadeth not away is given by the Chief Shepherd Himself to those who have fed His flock, and not themselves.

If by the repudiation of prelacy as anti-christian in its principle, we have underrated the value and blessing of a scriptural episcopacy—there is also a hindrance to our recognition of this blessing arising from an opposite quarter. The same apostle Peter who describes so beautifully the true episcopacy, warns not only against avaricious prelatical lordship, but against another kind of false episcopacy. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters" (1 Pet. iv. 15). This is but one compound word in the Greek

αλλοτρι■οεπ■σκοπος – “alotrioepiscopos”—one who takes for himself the oversight of other men’s matters, to the neglect of judging himself. The lordly domination of prelacy may be honestly repudiated by those who nevertheless assume to themselves the exercise of an equally false episcopacy. It is no legitimate part of true scriptural episcopacy to canvass the character of Christians, or to intrude into their domestic concerns. To do so is really to lord it over God’s heritage. It is a sad degradation of the episcopacy, if it be supposed to consist in meddlesome interference with the private affairs of Christians. Yet this is not unfrequently to be found even among real Christians, and has helped, among other things, to obscure the blessing of a truly scriptural episcopacy. God owns the place of the head of a family, as much as He owns the civil governor, and there are corresponding responsibilities on the part of the civil governor and of the head of the family, whether they acknowledge them or not. The general rule will here apply, “Them that honour Me, I will honour; those that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” This general rule is not confined to the household of faith. It requires, therefore, spiritual intelligence to know the proper limits of a scriptural episcopal superintendence; and not to cloke, under the good work of the episcopacy, the “busy-body in other men’s matters.”

Whether the gift of oversight be rare, or whether it be lightly esteemed, both which should lead us to humiliation on account of the general sin of insult offered to the Spirit of grace, one thing still remains to us, “self-episcopacy,” as the apostle teaches us. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Heb. 12:14, 15). The word here rendered looking diligently, is the same as that which is rendered (1 Pet. 5:2) “taking the oversight.” And well would it be for Christians if they practically owned such an episcopacy— “the root of bitterness” and profaneness would be less common among us. Diligent self-inspection would, at the same time, preserve us from the tendency to be busy-bodies in other men’s matters, give healthful tone to scriptural episcopacy where it exists, and make its value to be truly appreciated. He who is the most honest bishop over his own soul, will regard and value any whom the Holy Ghost has really made bishops, as gracious helps to Him personally; and, above all, will ever turn to Jesus, the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul, humbly yet confidently saying, “Thine eye seeth me.”

Remarks on 1 Cor. 4

THE apostle in the previous chapters having laid low all human pretension and headship in the Church, and claimed for God His proper and sovereign place, claims here for himself and his co-workers in the gospel their place also. We are ever prone either to set God aside for the creature, or to refuse the vessel that place which God has assigned him.

“Man in extremes how wide!”

It would be an interesting subject to trace this in Scripture. I only suggest the idea. Let the servant of God have his proper place, and let God have His also. That lawless spirit that would set up or put down man is to be guarded against. To say, “I am of Paul,” &c., was decidedly wrong; it was thinking of men “above that which is written,” and being “puffed up for one against another” (verse 6). There was danger, also, in not accounting of God’s servants according to that which is written. “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,” urges the apostle on the Corinthian saints (verse 1).

It is well for the servant of Christ not to expect anything from the creature, but everything from Christ. The Lord “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” and their work shall not be in vain in the Lord. Yet the servant is not above his Master: he should be content to be as his Master. He must therefore bear his burden, and drink his cup of sorrow and humiliation. “I think,” said Paul, “that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.” “We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (verse 9, 13).

It is sweet to see the servant of Christ performing an unceasing service in the midst of trial and sorrow for love’s sake—as to the Lord, and not to men—in the midst of all that withers the flesh. It is happy, also, to witness those who are served counting their helpers worthy of esteem and honour for their work’s sake. On the other hand, how sad it is where the vessel has in his service an eye to the honour and praise that come from men. How wretched where Christ is shut out by the influence of the servant, so that that which is most considered is the authority and feelings of the vessel. Where such is the case, conscience toward God has ceased to do its work, and the word of God is less esteemed than the word of man. It is a narrow path, and so the saint will ever find it. One truth should not be set aside for another; indeed, it is scarcely possible to hold any truth in power and do this, so blended together is truth in all its relative parts. The secret of holding truth and a good conscience, is to get the flesh in subjection, whether it be timid or forward flesh.

May we, beloved in the Lord, know more and more what it is, in all things to give Christ the preeminence; and while doing this not to forget His commandments in relation to every claim, whether in the family, in the world, or in the Church; so that in all things Christ may be glorified by us, whether in life or death. “The skirt of a Jew” will be important by-and-by, when God is with him, as “the shadow” of an apostle was in former days. The more we have of the presence of the living God, the more ready are we to honor all that is of Him, and all His appointments, and to give the

Divine Persons their primal place. Other things take their proper positions in our feelings and judgment, when God has His own foundation-place in our souls. He only is the root of all blessing and power; without Him man is nothing. The words that bind the soul and feed it are those of Jesus, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." How blessed! how happy in these days of endless voices of confusion, to have the words of Jesus opened to us by the Holy Ghost the Comforter, to save us from the will of man, to lead us to the green pastures of grace and love, and give us quiet resting-places beside the still waters.

May we treasure up more and more the words and ways of Jesus, and know how rightly to balance in our hearth every part of His truth, so that we turn not to the right or left till we see His face with joy.

An Example

Of the Lord's ways of wisdom and compassion, and our way of ignorance, pride, and indignation.

"THEN came to Jesus the mother or Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him....And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom....And when the ten heard it they were moved with indignation against the two brethren" (Matt. 20:20, 21, 24).

Was not pride in the ten at the root—too deep, I suppose, for them to see it—of their indignation against the pride of the two. The two with their mother came worshipping—they were true worshippers—but how their worship was mingled with evil of which they were ignorant! The two desired the place of dominion and authority, at the right hand and left hand of Christ, in His kingdom. The Lord begins His instruction to them by showing them that they know not what they ask; and brings them to consider the future in regard to their measure of baptism of suffering, and cup of sorrow. James drank deeply and early. John, I suppose, more deeply and protractedly.

Do we not trace the indignation of the ten to the same evil root as the desire of the two? Mark! when we in a bad spirit rebuke others for faults, we shall be let fall into the pit in which they are, or in which we take them to be. The Lord says to the ten what would apparently have suited the two—doubtless it suited the twelve. "Princes exercise dominion". . . "great exercise authority." Let the great be your servants: the chief (the princes among you) your slaves (original). The two would be great, let them serve. If the ten would be greater and rule over them, let them slave. CHRIST, THE GREAT RULER, IS THE PERFECT SERVANT. We know what is written about His work, and labor, and sorrow on the tree, the foretaste of which caused Him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Brethren, what is the cure for the pride in the disciples, and in us all? The 28 verse, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." O, beloved, the Son of man is the Son of God. He came not to be ministered unto, (may we remember both it and Him,) but to minister; the crown of His service is His cross, and without that there is no other cure for all the disciples' sins and infirmities— "to give His LIFE a ransom for many"!

Should indignation and pride gain ground, may we be speedily reminded of the Cross; may we indeed ever remember Jesus Christ, and Him crucified and glorified, and then pride and indignation will be underfoot, and compassion, springing out of love to Him and His members, will be the exercise of our souls.

“Thy Commandment Is Exceeding Broad.”-No. I

Psalm 119:96

THE Lord Jesus “knew what was in man,” and frequently addressed His word to some mainspring of human conduct. Hence we find the same words applied by our Lord to different circumstances, be cause they bear on some leading principle of the human heart. The great moral lesson, “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,” is given by the Lord under three different circumstances. There is a deeply rooted thought in the heart of man, that if he can only raise himself above his actual condition, he will secure both his happiness and dignity. In the earliest record of the history of man, he caught at the thought of being as God, knowing good and evil; he exalted himself and was forthwith abased. But the thought still remains in his heart, and shows itself in reference both to God and man, and has even entered, where it seemed most unlikely to find a place, into the church of God. The leading principle of man is self-elevation; this may properly be contrasted with the leading principle of Christ’s doctrine which is self-denial; and if we follow out the principle of self-exaltation to its legitimate result, it will be found to issue in the denial of redemption altogether. Man seeks happiness by elevating himself; Christ saves sinners by coming down, by humbling Himself. Man tries, although in vain, to exalt himself, for all his efforts fail to emancipate him from the power of sin and death; but Christ actually did humble Himself. The highest attainment for a Christian is to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, who “being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation.” There are two opposite and diverging lines of seeking blessing, the ascending line which is that of man, and the descending line which is that of God, and according as men are pursuing the one or the other of these ways, so their end will be. Man’s line of exalting himself ends in Babylon, which is to be destroyed; Christ’s line of self-humiliation ends in exalting to glory, with Himself, all those who, self-emptied, glory only in Him. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down.” Man never reaches anything really good or perfect according to the line of self-exaltation. The apostle Paul even turns aside from speaking of the ascension of Christ to notice his previous humiliation: “Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens.” Here is the divine order exhibited in perfection, in the humiliation of Christ, and the glory consequent thereon. The good and perfect Gift of God, Christ Himself, came down, and is only to be received by faith. “The Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” All that man needs as a sinner for reconciliation with God, all that he needs for comfort while in the world, or for happiness throughout eternity, is alone found in the Bread of God which came down from heaven. The way of God is not our way. The way of God is for Himself to come down, the way of man is to seek to get up; and the end will prove that the way of God is the only way both of salvation and happiness.

Such considerations give deep interest to the thrice repeated instruction of the Lord, “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” First, in order, let

us regard it as applied to man in reference to God. "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one—a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Pharisee exalted himself, the Publican humbled himself. The Pharisee preferred his claim to God, and lifted himself up into God's presence by comparing himself with another; he challenged the favour of God by his presumed superiority over others. This is a faithful picture of human religion, which is in fact a bidding for God's favor upon the ground of what one man is in reference to another. On the other hand, the Publican humbled himself by seeing God alone with whom to compare himself, so that unless mercy came down to him from God to meet him just as he was, he was lost for ever. In the end it will be found that the truest pretensions of Pharisaic religion must be laid low in order that the Lord alone may be exalted, and the self-emptied will be filled out of the abundant fullness which is in Christ Jesus. The Publican called upon Him who is rich in mercy, which came down to meet him in all his need; but none of the pretensions of the Pharisee could reach up to God, so as to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and not found wanting.

Next there is the social application of the same principle: "And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms, saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee; for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Lord put forth this as a parable, drawing from the usages of society the great moral with which the instruction closes. A proud pushing man is sure to meet with many mortification, from which a modest unpretending man is exempt. He that challenges for himself that which he regards as due to himself, forces others to measure his pretensions with those of others, and if they find them wanting, they feel satisfaction in setting him down. How clear is the application of the parable. All human pretensions are, in the sight of God, comparisons between the man who makes them and Christ. When God weighs human pretensions in the balance of the sanctuary, he weighs them against Christ. It is this which gives so offensive a character to self-righteousness before God. "That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." Such is self-righteousness. It virtually sets aside the honor of the Christ of God, as the righteous One, and "the holy One of God." To all such pretenders, God must say, Go down lower. And with what shame will all pretenders to wisdom, righteousness, or holiness, take their place; even crying to the rocks and hills to fall on them, and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, the Lord draws the contrast between the teaching, and the ways and works of the disciples of Moses. They might teach Moses very clearly; "but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." They "love to be called of men, Rabbi;" but, says Jesus to His disciples, "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are

brethren. And call no man your father on the earth; for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called Masters, for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." It is hardly necessary to point out that corrupt Christendom is based on the total disregard of these precepts. In the language of Christendom the so-called clergy are the Church; and very generally they assume to be the Church, so as to be impatient of what they characterize lay-interference. But it is among real Christians that the great danger of leadership is most conspicuous. A minister of Christ may either take the place of a leader, or be set in the place of one by others. In either case the danger is great. To the leader, if he assumes the place himself, the danger is lest he exercise dominion over the faith of others, instead of helping their joy. To those who set the teacher in the place of the leader, although he assume it not himself, the danger is, of regarding rather, "Thus saith the leader," than "Thus saith the Lord." To both alike there is the danger of losing the sense of direct responsibility to the Lord; and of forgetting the honored place of the servant, and the happy place of common brotherhood. For a minister of Christ to exalt himself as a religious leader, is to place the gift of the Lord, which ceases when that which is perfect is come, above the essential union of the least member of the body of Christ with Him the living Head. He exalts himself, but he must be abased, in order to know that in doing so he is losing the sense of his highest dignity, which is the common dignity of all. The Lord has often found it needful to discipline His ministering servants, lest they should be exalted by the gift of His grace, as though it were their own acquirement. The apostle Paul knew what it was to be the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints; but he had to be humbled by enduring many mortifications, not only from unbelieving Jews and idolatrous Gentiles, but also from real Christians. He knew how "to be abased." Difficult knowledge to attain; but when attained it led him to learn the depth of the wisdom, as well as the blessedness, of "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." So long as the gospel is preached and received, so long will the name of Him, who was treated as the offscouring of all things, be revered. The divine order is, "Before honour is humility." May we be "clothed" with it, as our greatest adornment.

'Tis Jesus Makes Me Whole

LORD, at Thy feet I now lie down,
And pour out all my soul;
For there I find relief, and own
'Tis Jesus makes me whole.
This wayward, willful, sinning heart,
Beyond my own control,
Is quieted as faith beholds,
'Tis Jesus makes me whole.
Thy blood I own—Thy precious blood,
And love so free and full,
Have met my need, and made me cry,
'Tis Jesus makes me whole.
Lord, I adore Thy blessed grace,
Which gave me faith to roll
The burden of my sins on Thee:
'Tis Jesus makes me whole.

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ALL THINGS.—All things are of God. He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. All things work together for good to them that love God. All things are yours. Of Him, to Him, and through Him are all things.

## The Purpose of God, the Salvation of God, and the Glory of God

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“According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.”-Eph. 3:11,12.

Is not the Lord Jesus Christ to be admired and adored for what He is in Himself? How emphatically He is the “Wonderful”—the great “Mystery of Godliness!” The “seed of Abraham,” and yet “the Mighty God:” “the fruit of David’s loins,” and yet Jehovah’s “Fellow:” “made of a woman,” and yet the Maker of “all things:” “like unto His brethren,” yet “separate from sinners:” the “Child born,” and yet the “Son given:” “found in fashion as a Man,” yet “the Image of the invisible God,”— “the brightness of His glory:” “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” yet “without sin.” How glorious, infinitely glorious, He is! How exactly fitted for the work of eternal redemption! What a mighty Days-man to lay His hand both on God and us! How wise! How truly able to sympathize with us! for assuredly, as we sometimes sing,

‘His heart is made of tenderness,

His bowels melt with love!’

And what a sacrifice that was, when He “offered Himself without spot to God!” What forgiveness, as well as consecration, the blood of that Lamb speaks to our consciences—the Offerer, One in whom the Father was well-pleased, the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts; the Offering that in which Jehovah could find both satisfaction and delight—sin was borne, judged, condemned, and put away, justice satisfied, and the holy Lord God glorified. How blessed also it is to consider that “all the promises of God”—all His rich purposes of grace—are in Christ “yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God, by us,” so that our Lord could say, “I am glorified in them.” Surely we must add, “How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”

But let us dive still deeper into these unsearchable realities, and we shall soon perceive,

“Twas love that brought Him down,

The purest, strongest love’—

eternal, unchangeable, redeeming, faithful love. Mercy “from everlasting,” according to the eternal counsel and purpose of Him, who gave us to Christ, chose us in Christ, and redeemed us by Christ; so that the divine declaration is, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” God loved us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. How sweet it is thus to look back into the deep and eternal counsels of God, and see how the salvation which He wrought in Christ, exactly corresponds both with His own decree and our deep necessity. The eternal purpose of God being the glory of Christ in our salvation, redemption must therefore be “in Him.” As guilty sinners could only be brought into God’s presence without blame by a Saviour, one who, moreover, was capable of satisfying the stern requirements of divine justice, our Lord Jesus Christ undertook, and did, at the cost of His own guiltless life, obtain our entrance into that holy presence—He proved Himself

capable of, and all-sufficient for, this stupendous work. Thus “we, who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” By virtue of the infinite perfections of the Offerer and the Offering, God’s eternal purpose of salvation by grace is most blessedly effected, and an ever-lastingly-efficacious redemption accomplished for us; so that the decree of Jehovah, the security of the believer, and the glory of God, have all been met once and for ever in that “one offering,” which Christ “once offered.” How gracious was the utterance of the loving heart of Jesus, when He said, “My goodness extendeth....to the saints which are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is ALL MY DELIGHT.” (Ps. 41)

But do we not further see in the “finished” work of the Son of God, that the perfection of love displayed in the perfect work of this spotless One, makes us “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?” Surely it was as our “Surety” that He died upon the cross; and there we see not only the Son “forsaken” and “spared not,” but also an offering brought to God in which He is infinitely glorified, in which He takes ineffable delight, and in which He finds, too, “a savor of rest.” And was it not for us? Most assuredly, “He gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” Thus we are “righteous,” by His “obedience”—“accepted in the Beloved” — “complete in Him;” not only ransomed from hell by His blood, but fitted for His presence, by “the righteousness of God which is into all and upon all them that believe.” How precious it is to be occupied with God’s estimate of the worth and work of His beloved Son, and thus find, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that His glory is great in our salvation, and that it is a salvation worthy of Him who doeth great things and unsearchable! And does not the contemplation of these glorious realities make Christ Himself more precious to our souls? and necessarily, therefore, more constantly and unfeignedly the Object of our affections and worship? Do we not thus realize the blessed liberty of His yoke? and are we not constrained to yield to Him our willing and obedient service? Surely, these things are so; and when the Holy Ghost thus reveals to us the wondrous mystery of Emmanuel’s cross, how worthless and insignificant the world appears! How transient! How rapidly it “passeth away” to make room for that full power of redemption that will be connected with the Lord’s return! To the spiritual eye the world now appears a dark spot which God has consigned to judgment, but men are spending all their time and energy in seeking happiness in it apart from God and Christ.

But there is another thought in connection with the perfect work of Jesus, and it is this:—If we are “justified from all things,” and “perfected for ever,” through His being “made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” necessarily our hope and prospect must be correspondingly perfect, and pregnant with glory and bliss. And, blessed be God, they are; and that, too, in strict keeping with God’s eternal purpose “in Christ;” for, “the mystery of His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” being “to gather together in one all things IN CHRIST,” we are taught by the Holy Ghost, in the word, to “look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body;” and to rest in the assurance, that HE will come again and receive us unto HIMSELF—that “when HE shall appear we shall be like HIM, for we shall see HIM as HE is;” and “he for ever with the Lord.” It is Christ Himself, “in whom we have obtained an inheritance,” who is our hope, and He says, “Behold, I come quickly!”

How precious it is, beloved, to learn from the oracles of God, that all this wondrous and everlasting blessing comes to us through Him who “offered HIMSELF,” “gave HIMSELF” for us, “put away sin

by the sacrifice of HIMSELF;" that it is Christ HIMSELF who now appears in the presence of God for us; and that it is "the Lord HIMSELF" we wait for, and expect to see, and to be with, and like for ever!

How happy to see the blessed harmony of the purpose of God, the grace of God, and the glory of God, and to trace therein not only the "Lams slain from the foundation of the world," but also in the glory that is to be revealed, that "the Lamb is the light thereof;" and those only are there "which are written in the LAMB'S book of life." Surely it is the Lamb who is the Alpha and the Omega, the center of, and way to all this glory. None was found worthy to open the book, or look thereon, but "the Lamb as it had been slain;" and it is the worthiness of the Lamb that fills heaven with unceasing praise and glory. From the throne of God and the LAMB the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," proceeds; and it is the Liras that feeds, and that leads the blood-washed multitude to fountains of living waters. It is because the throne of God and the LAMB is there, that there will be no more curse. By grace Christ is our LAMB as well as the LAMB of God; yea, rather, because He is God's LAMB He is our LAMB. We have come to God by Him, we have access to the Father through Him, our sins were laid upon Him, we trust in Him, we have peace with God through Him, we are complete in Him, and we wait for Him: we find in Him full salvation, suitable salvation, everlasting salvation; yea, God's salvation, and, therefore, all our salvation. Hence we joyfully lift up our heart, and sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Well we may add,

'How can I sink with such a prop  
As my eternal God,  
Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,  
And spreads the heavens abroad?  
'How can I die while Jesus lives,  
Who rose and left the dead?  
Pardon and life my soul receives  
From my exalted HEAD.'

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THE LORD is MY SHEPHERD.—Oh, to be led, drawn, and sent by Him continually! and made to lie down, too! None but Christ Himself can so fill our souls with the sweetness of His green pastures, as to make us lie down therein; yet how can there be growth unless we chew the cud there. The world is rapidly hasting on its course—drawing near its terrible end: but we are sheep, and our heavenly blessing is to be led and fed by the Lamb. What fullness there is in Jesus! He is the LAMB of God and the SON of God; yea, all fullness dwells in Him.

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THE LORD WAS WITH HIM.—This was said of David in his early day. This is at the root of his humility, and wisdom, and skill; it enabled him to hide himself and his greatness behind his

harp-strings. The anointed of the Lord a harp-player to the rejected king! The man of war content to return to feed the sheep—his father's sheep—to be his father's and his brother's servant! "The Lord was with him:" this was enough. With Saul, with the sheep, with his trembling and offending brethren, with Goliath—it matters not where; it matters not what to do—the Lord was with him. The Lord was for him, also. He can conquer Lion, Bear, SELF, Goliath, Saul. His brethren think and make nothing of him. Be it so. He can bear it. The Lord was with him.

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OTTE SUFFICIENCY.—Let us never forget the all-sufficiency of the grace of God—"My grace is sufficient for thee;" the all-sufficiency of the word of God – "All Scripture is given....that the man of God may be throughly furnished unto all good works;" the all-sufficiency of the Spirit of God— "He shall guide you into all truth," "bring all things to your remembrance,"&c. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

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THAT is the happy knowledgs of Christ which reflects back the rays of resurrection-glory, and not only keeps our eyes open as to the evil that surrounds our path down here, but so lights up the future as to make us desire to depart and to be with HIM—to be associated in all that glory.

## Leaving the Waterpot

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### JOHN 4:28

IN the story of the woman of Samaria, we see not only the grace of God in Christ to a sinner dead in sins, but also a sample of the blessed results of personal communion with the Lord. Nothing compensates the Christian for the lack of this— “without Me,” said Jesus, “ye can do nothing.” Outward service has its proper and healthful time and sphere of exercise, and the neglect of such service would be disobedience to the word of God; but, however spiritually conducted, it cannot make up for a deficiency of personal communion with the Lord. The former should result from the latter.

It is when we feel ourselves alone with Him that we are in a position to receive instruction, correction, and comfort of a peculiarly personal character; and the self-judging process that He leads to (v. 16), not only humbles, but prepares us to appreciate the wisdom, power, and grace of God with heartfelt gratitude, while we derive consolation therefrom. It is then, especially, that He leads us to review our past history, and to learn experimentally the deep necessity for, as well the true reality of, the superabounding grace of God.

The natural heart is selfish and covetous; “earthly things” concentrate its desires, and “the world” is the boundary of its hopes; but when, by divine grace, we are brought to feel and own our present position as debtors, and to know that the Creditor frankly forgives us, seeing we have nothing to pay—when, by faith, we see that the Son of God has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and that we are “called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” —then our expectations and our hopes take another direction, and we “desire a better country, that is an heavenly.” But even after this, if the eye grow dim to the deep and eternal realities of our Father’s kingdom, the mind will, more or less, return to its naturally accustomed occupation. It is only when unfading and eternal beauty shines upon our sods, as beheld in the glorious Person of the Son of God, that changeful and perishable objects and pursuits are weighed in the true balance and “found wanting,” so that we can take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing that we “have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

It is this principle that strikes me to be so prominently set forth in the inspired account of the Samaritan woman. Before Christ revealed HIMSELF to her, her religion was purely traditional, her heart was untouched, her conversation therefore rose no higher than remarks on the religious topics of the day. Perceiving that Jesus was “a prophet,” she would fain hide her sinful course and disturbed conscience behind the mountain-worship of her fathers. She felt not “the love of God,” because she knew not “the Gift of God;” therefore talk, and not self-denying devotedness to Jesus, was the chief element of her religion. She was ignorant of the fact that “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” And it may be here remarked, that a knowledge of true principles, or a correct acquaintance with the letter of Scripture, may fit a person for conversation or argument on religious questions, but give him no power to “deny ungodliness and worldly lust;” but let “the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” be seen; let “God manifest in the flesh” be believingly looked

unto; let the slain Lamb of God be beheld by a convicted sinner, and then, what a mighty soul-constraining power is put into exercise! What truth and love become manifested!

It was only when the woman of Samaria beheld the Messiah in the person of Him who had told her all things that ever she did, that she “left her waterpot,” and went into the city to bear testimony to the exceeding riches of His grace. And with what ease, and, if I may so speak, how naturally she walked according to the new and heavenly principles implanted in her soul! Her personal acquaintance with the Messiah had translated her thoughts and heart from earth to heaven. Her conversation was no longer about “our father Jacob, who gave us the well,” nor the fathers’ worship in the mountain, but it was concerning “THE CHRIST:” —the grace of Christ, “He told me,” a sinful woman—the power and wisdom of Christ, “He told me all that ever I did;” so that having been alone in His presence, she could speak what she knew, and testify what she had seen— “Is not this the Christ?” And this is not all, she desires that others should participate in the joy and peace which she had, she therefore entreats them to “come” and “see” the Christ. The rest and peace of her soul was CHRIST, and Christ only; the tradition of the fathers, which had so beclouded her mind, vanished when she saw the Christ; her testimony, therefore, was to “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” She had been with Jesus, and had learned of Him. Who now so lovely, so attractive, so worthy, so all-sufficient, so soul-satisfying to her as Jesus! Had she not heard His word, and in the secret of the Divine presence become experimentally acquainted with the “Gift of God,” and who He was that said unto her, “Give Me to drink?” Was not the water that He gave her a well springing up in her into everlasting life? Had He not unfolded to her the very secrets of her heart? Had she not tasted that the Lord was gracious? Then, could she be indifferent to His honor? Could she look on Christ-less, perishing souls, and be silent? Could she delay openly to extol and magnify Him who had so condescendingly commended His love toward her? Are not her neighbors going downward to destruction, because they know not “the Gift of God?” What claim then can the “waterpot” have, however necessary in its place, comparable to the love of Jesus and the needy condition of immortal souls? “The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?”

And surely, beloved, our danger in the present day is not so much in the neglect of attention to things necessary for the present life, as in allowing needful occupations and lawful employments to have the priority in our minds and ways. The Spirit of God teaches us not to be indifferent to, or negligent of, these things—He commands us to “maintain good works for necessary uses;” but the Lord Himself, and all that in which His glory is involved, must be the first consideration with us. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” The Lord is stronger than we, let us not provoke Him to jealousy. He is “the Father of spirits,” the Searcher of hearth, and judgeth without respect of persons. God is not mocked. “My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me,” was His affecting complaint (Ps. 81:11); but let not those expect to realize the light of His countenance who make the honour of Christ, the welfare of His Church, and the testimony of His gospel, matters of secondary importance. Brethren, let us deal solemnly with ourselves on these points. Is “Christ” or the “Waterpot” the “first” object of our search? Paul wept over many in his day, because they were minding earthly things; he called them “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18, 19); although, on another occasion, he had to reprove some for idleness, and lack of those industrious habits, which

become the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 3:10-12). It is happy so to walk in the fear of the Lord, that in the needful details of life we may “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour,” and that our habit of mind may be to “do all for the glory of God.” It is only in this way we can “use this world as not abusing it;” and we can only do this when the heart is filled with the constraining love of Christ, from personal communion with Him. When He is truly felt to be our treasure, our heart cannot but be most deeply interested in all that which concerns Him. It was so with the Samaritan woman, as we have seen; and we may add, how reproving, as well as instructive, this narrative is! How wonderful the wisdom of our God in prescribing for us, in this history, a remedy so effectual for soul-sickness and lukewarmness! Is it not because we have so little personal acquaintance with Christ Himself, that earthly things have such power over us, and that we so fail is testimony to the grace of God? The unconverted have no power to forsake perishing things, they are not acquainted with any higher claim on their affections than that of “earthly things;” they know nothing about “a better and an enduring substance;” their motto is, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;” but those who have known “the Gift of God,” and learnt with joy to “draw water out of the wells of salvation,” can well afford to leave the “waterpot,” and commit their earthly care to Him who is their newfound source of refreshment and strength. We find that when Andrew had beheld the Lamb of God, and abode with Him, he was anxious for the souls of others, and so powerfully testified of the Christ whom he himself had become personally acquainted with, that he brought his own brother Simon to Jesus (John 1:35, 42). Nor was the simple, earnest testimony of the woman of Samaria less successful, for we are told that many believed on Jesus because of her saying which she testified, “He told me all things that ever I did.”

Do not such Scriptures as these, dear brethren, blessedly illustrate to our souls that precious truth, “We love Him because He first loved us?” May we be afresh stirred up to cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart!

## Mystery and Mysticism

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WHEREVER there is mysticism there must also be mystery; yet mystery must not be confounded with mysticism. “Great is the mystery of godliness;” it confounds reason, yet is reasonable. Hearing, we believe—God speaks—faith bows to the authority of His word, but she cannot, dare not even, attempt to explain much that she believes: it is enough for her that “it is written.” Mysticism, on the other hand, believes, because it feels: it does not disown the written Word, but it acts as though the Spirit inspired and guided the affections and instincts of the new nature over and above the Word. Along this “onward path,” so-called, the faith of God’s elect, which knows no other lamp for its feet than the written Word, cannot go. The love of God, the cross of Christ, the power of the Holy Ghost, the authority of the written Word, these are inseparable—they hang together; they cannot be understood apart one from the other. To take heed to this will be our safeguard from mysticism with its elevations and aspirations, so captivating to spiritual and meditative minds.

## **“Thy Commandment Is Exceeding Broad.”-No. 2**

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Psalm 119:96.

THE thought that there is to be a time of disclosure of that which is now either obscured or secret is a very solemn thought. The revelation of the Lord Jesus in glory will make good every word which God has spoken, however that word may now be contradicted by appearances. “That day will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.”

The Lord Jesus, in His ministry, applied to different persons, and with a different bearing, the words, “There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.” (Matt. 10:26.) Such is the breadth of the truth contained in these words, that they are used by our Lord in the way of encouragement as well as of warning.

On the memorable occasion of the Lord of the harvest sending forth laborers into His harvest (Matt. 10), Jesus having pointed out to them all the perils of their mission, that they would be as sheep among wolves, that men to whom they preached the glad tidings of salvation would be against them, that their own kindred would be their foes, that they would be charged by religionists with being in league with Satan, thus encourages them: “Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.” (Matt. 10:26, 27.)

In the description given by the apostle of “the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16), there is the contrast between “seen of angels, and preached unto the Gentiles.” Preaching is testimony to the truth, which the revelation of the Lord Jesus in glory will palpably substantiate. So long as there is preaching, the doctrines taught by the Lord Himself, and by His apostles, will be open to the captious criticism of men, because they carry not with them the demonstration which man’s wisdom thinks fit to demand. And when the doctrines of Christ are only supported by the arguments of human wisdom, however honestly intended, the doctrines themselves are lowered and weakened, because it is the judgment of man on what God has revealed, and not the authority of God appealing directly to the conscience. The tendency “to savor the things of men” instead of “the things of God,” is found in the disciple of the Lord Himself. (Matt. 16:23.) This consideration, coupled with the sweeping assertion, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him,” draws the line between the preacher declaring the testimony of God, and the skillful arguer and debater. The apostle Paul repudiated such aid, which he was well able to have used, when he had to do with a people trained to all subtlety of argument. “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.” (1 Cor. 2:1.) It was “the testimony of God” to His own grace, and to His own estimate of the work of Christ on the cross, and therefore incapable of human demonstration. But there was One, even the Holy Ghost, who could and did demonstrate these things to such as He quickened. “My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in

the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.” (1 Cor. 2:4, 5.) The apostle did not come to the Corinthians with human credentials. That which had been revealed to him he declared to them, leaving the truth to commend itself to their consciences. What the Lord had “told him in darkness,” in visions or revelations, that he spoke forth in the light, as the truth which, however gainsayed by men, was nevertheless the truth of God; what the Lord had whispered in his ear, he preached upon the housetop. The servant might, as his Lord and Master, be called a madman, or one in league with Beelzebub; his words might be thought the words of a babbler, or the ravings of one out of his mind; but they were, nevertheless, “the words of soberness and truth.” There was a day coming which would make good his words. They might now appear obscure, mysterious, or wanting in sober sense; but “there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.” This was to embolden the apostle in his testimony; this was the reason why he should not fear the gainsayers. “Fear them not, therefore.” There was a day coming, when the Lord would make good, beyond dispute, all His words, and “judge all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” It is by the tongue that men think to prevail: the last days of corrupt Christendom are characterized by men speaking great swelling words of vanity, and the great Apostate himself is characterized by “a mouth speaking great things;” but the day of revelation will make it manifest “whose words shall stand,” those of the Lord or those of man. (Jer. 44:28.) There should be a fearlessness in testifying to the truth; but such is man, that instead of fearlessness there is often shame. “Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me,” says Jesus, “and of My words.” Men who are morally truthful, for the most part find present opportunity for establishing their veracity. But the word of God which the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of truth, applies to the conscience with such demonstration and power to those whom He has quickened, fails of carrying conviction to the natural heart of man. Man is set against “the truth,” whether in the Person or word of Christ. He will not hear God speak. (Prov. 1:24-33.) “Why do ye not understand My speech?” says Jesus, “even because ye cannot hear My word... And I, because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not.” (John 8:43 -45.) In what a deplorable condition is man? “The Truth” Himself, speaking the truth, is not believed. “The Liar” and father of lies finds ready credence.

It is the solemn conviction, that the day is coming when that which is now “covered shall be revealed,” which can alone impart boldness in testifying “the gospel of the grace of God.” “The truth” carries its own evidence wherever it is received; it is “all plain to him that understandeth;” but there ever will be that in the gospel of the grace of God, which will be “hid from the wise and prudent.” No one was ever brought to know the peace of the gospel by arguments, although the arguments for its truth are incontestable. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see.” That which God “hides from the wise and prudent, He reveals unto babes;” and that which He now reveals to the heart and conscience by the Spirit, will be publicly demonstrated at the revelation of Jesus in glory. But although the present testimony is to riches of grace, and riches of glory, laid up in Christ for them that trust Him, yet the one and the other so far surpass all preconceived human thought and expectation, that their announcement falls on the ear “as idle tales.” Something lower and more according to human thoughts than perfect grace, something that would leave man to appear as a prominent actor, will be tolerated even if it be not received. But the announcement of a present salvation and positive security to him that believeth in Jesus, is not only far above the reach of human thought, but so necessarily brings God into prominence, and man into contact with God, that man not only disputes the truth of the testimony, but manifests at the same time the entire alienation of his heart from God. “Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we

desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.” (Job 21:14.) To persist in a testimony, against which the whole tide of human thought and feeling is strongly set, requires no small encouragement; and the danger of turning away from testimony to disputation is at all times imminent. The apostle Paul craved the prayers of the Ephesians in very strong language: “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds.” (Eph. 6:19, 20.) The ambassador of the Lord of glory, bearing the message of His love and grace to those who had no claim on Him, declaring the unsearchable riches of Christ, found his testimony to end in his imprisonment. But he was “not ashamed,” neither swerved from his testimony, which excited derision among the wise, and opposition among the religious. He knew that there was “nothing hid which should not be revealed;” and he boldly proclaimed on the housetop that which had been whispered in his own ear. The day of the revelation of the Lord Jesus beamed brightly on the soul of the apostle, and encouraged him to constancy in his testimony, despised as it was. “That day” would abundantly vindicate its truth.

In writing his last epistle to his own son in the faith, the danger lest the testimony should be lowered, or tampered with, pressed heavily upon him. “Stir up the gift which is in thee,” he writes, “for God hath not given us the spirit of fear [cowardice], but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner.” (2 Tim. 1:6-8.) That testimony was to death abolished, and to life and incorruptibility brought to light by the gospel. For this testimony the apostle was suffering: “Nevertheless,” he says, “I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” “That day” would fully prove that the testimony of the Lord would not bring shame with it. “That day” would bring “life and incorruptibility to light” in a way which could not be gainsayed.

In anticipation of the perilous days which were impending, the apostle charges Timothy before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom, “Preach the word.” It might seem of little avail to stem the torrent of ungodliness or the strong tide of formality to persist in a rejected testimony, but the appearing of the Lord Jesus would amply vindicate that testimony. Hid and obscure as it might be thought, it would be open and plain then.

But now all the perils which the apostle saw as future are present. The time has come and men have “heaped to themselves teachers, and are turned away from the truth, and are turned unto fables.” How needed therefore “the testimony of the Lord.” How soon may the foolishness of preaching be made manifest as the wisdom of God, in destructive judgment on mockers and despisers, by the Lord Jesus Himself being manifested in glory! “There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known.”

In Mark 4:22, and Luke 8:17, we have the same words applied in connection with the parable of the sower. “And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed; and not to be set in a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested, neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

The parables are generally considered as that part of the Lord's teaching which is most readily comprehended. And assuredly there is on the surface of the parable something so plain, as easily to be recognized; but under the surface will be found hid the deep things of God. The reason assigned by our Lord for using this method of instruction, is, that the plainest instruction which words can convey would be thrown away on all who were blinded as to their actual condition before God. "And the disciples came and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath to him shall be given; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath. Therefore speak I unto them in parables, because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand."

The action of the parable of the sower is simple and plain; yet who thinks that the reception of the word of God by faith into the heart makes the essential difference between man and man? Who hears as though in having an ear to hear depended the salvation of the soul? "Hear and your soul shall live." Men take it for granted that they understand, and for this very reason hearing they hear and understand not. "If ye were blind ye should have no sin, but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

The truth hidden under the parable will in due time be manifested. But that very truth which is now hidden from the wise and prudent because they say, "We see," is now revealed to such as know they are ignorant, and believe that God can teach them. In the face then of human wisdom and prudence, they are not to hide what the Lord has revealed to them, but to be the candlestick to hold the light; for in a very little while man's light will be turned into darkness, and the great secret of redemption, which is "with them that fear the Lord," will come abroad.

The apostle thus exhorts the Philippians, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Their life was to be one of testimony to others that they were right. However others might dispute with, or argue against them, the Lord would, in His own time, manifest that they were right.

In the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we find a very different application of the same truth. "When there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, He began to say unto His disciples, first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops."

This caution being addressed to disciples may well lead to great searching of heart. The leaven of Pharisaism is very subtle and penetrating, and therefore needs to be suspected as having place in our own hearts. One feature of Pharisaism is that of being satisfied, because we satisfy the expectations of others. A doctrinal or moral standard is readily formed by Christians associated together, and by this standard Christians are apt to measure themselves with self-complacency. "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things and they derided Him: and He said, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which

is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.” “God knoweth our hearts,” what is hid there will be known. The use of the Lord’s name to cover over our own tempers; the indignation against evil in others to minister to our own self-complacency; the readiness to rejoice in iniquity, instead of rejoicing in the truth; these and such like tendencies, which we have discovered in our deceitful and desperately wicked hearts, partake of the character of “the leaven of the Pharisees.”

Regard even to our own consistency, jealousy of being thought wrong by others, and the exceeding difficulty of allowing to others that we are or have been in the wrong, all spring from the same source, the leaven of the Pharisees, the desire to justify ourselves before men. Jesus Himself was God’s test applied to the Pharisees—would they prefer themselves or Him whom God had sent? Even so it is now. Jesus is the test by which we can prove our hearts. Is our object the praise of men or of God? Are we anxious to vindicate our own honour or the honour of Jesus? How sensitively should we beware of the leaven of the Pharisees! And what shall be our security against it, but to seek to make the very warning of the Lord an encouragement, as did His faithful and single-eyed servant, the apostle Paul: “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man’s day (see margin); yea, I judge not mine ownself, for I know nothing by myself: yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.” (1 Cor. 4:3-5.)

It is a great thing to be consciously open and naked before Him with whom we have to do, now that during man’s day we have opportunity of concealing our motives from men, and may be often subject to their unfair and adverse judgment. It was the habit of bringing the light of “that day” to bear on present things, that gave the apostle a present joy when he labored under injurious aspersions. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.” (2 Cor. 1:12.)

The Pharisees derided Jesus when He announced to them His doctrine. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Fleshly wisdom was the very thing on which they prided themselves. To know how to attenuate the truth of God, so as least to interfere with self-interest or self-complacency, how to catch the spirit of the age, and sanction it by some goodly name, is of “the leaven of the Pharisees.” Saul, the Pharisee, had to be taught by the strong hand of the Lord another lesson. “For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.” (1 Thess. 2:3-6.)

God “requireth truth in the inward parts.” He has made provision in the priestly ministry of Jesus that we may be maintained truthfully before Him, even as were the Thessalonians; “remembering,” writes the apostle, “your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.”

In the sight of God we never lose our character of sinners saved by grace; in the sight of God we have no pretensions; but out of His presence pretensions are apt to arise, and we practically forget

that we are only recipients. We measure others by ourselves, and the leaven of the Pharisees is unsuspectedly at work; but God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Any secret contempt of others, who follow not with us, and fall short of our measure of knowledge, or practice, hardly expressed now, will then be known.

When the doctrine is openly avowed by those who think in themselves that they are righteous and despise others, we instinctively recoil from it. But it is not less loathsome before God when it is secretly entertained in the heart. The day of disclosure will manifest the counsels of the heart. No glorying in the flesh will abide its light. The day of disclosure will show most manifestly that the saints themselves are only sinners saved by grace, through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the day of disclosure, "the first will be last, and the last first." The day of disclosure will bring to light many a passed by and forgotten act of the saints themselves, on which the Lord has stamped a value. "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

Oh! for grace to live, move, act, speak, and eves think in the sight of our God and Father; for "Jesus said unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known."

## Remarks on 1 Cor. 5

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THE apostle having previously taught the Corinthian saints the insufficiency of the creature, the power of God, and how to regard the ministers of Christ, proceeds in this chapter to instruct them as to their responsibility to maintain the holiness of the house of God.

There are two serious and deadly evils to be guarded against in the Church, false doctrine, and false practice. Admit either into the communion of saints, and leaven is at once found in their midst. Leaven, as a general principle, refers either to doctrine or practice. A Church must be grievously fallen that tolerates either. False doctrine must lead to false practice—must deplete more or less the Divine character—it poisons the fountain of the Church's life and blessing. Ungodly walking destroys the Church's testimony, and blasphemes the name of Christ, by presenting a character the reverse of His, while professing to express His mind and ways.

Discipline in the Church is not the act of one or two persons, but the act of all in communion. (Verse 4, 5.) "Do not ye judge them that are within? Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (Verse 12, 13.) The class of persons not to be companied with are clearly defined in this chapter. The saints were charged to keep the feast only "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (Verse 8.) Purity of doctrine and practice were essentially necessary to their corporate Church condition. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," is a solemn statement, and clearly interdicts leaven from the Church of God.

It seems plain that leaven, in the Scriptures, refers to erroneous doctrine and evil practice. "Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." (Matt. 16:6.) "Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." (Verse 12.) The Pharisees and Sadducees had made void the word of God by their traditions. The Galatians had turned aside from grace to the law, and many were corrupted from gospel truth. To such Paul said, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Gal. 5:4.) Such was the leaven of false doctrine that sprang up amongst the Galatian saints, and was to be avoided and put away. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump," teaches the apostle here also. "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." (Verse 10.) "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." (Verse 12.)

Exodus 12 should be read in connection with the putting away of leaven. Leaven was to be excluded from the paschal feast, under the penalty of being cut off from Israel (verse 15); it was to have no place in the house—a striking type, and so used by the apostle, of the holiness and discipline of the house of God. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened: for even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:7, 8.)

Much prayerful waiting on God, and searching of His word, are often needed to be assured of the Lord's mind concerning dealing with evil in the Church. This being a dispensation of grace, as well as of righteousness, judgment should be mingled with mercy; and much patience may be needed, so that the offender may, if possible, be restored and not put away; restoration, and not excommunication, being the rule of Scripture, save in extreme cases.

To define by sectarian rules what is and what is not leaven, must result in much damage to the consciences and spiritual judgment of the saints; so many attendant and collateral circumstances in each case requiring special attention, and perhaps a different mode of treatment. It would therefore be impossible for one taking the range of Scripture, and having the heart of a loving and true shepherd, to settle, by the aid of bye-laws, the discipline of saints. Alas! how many in the haste of the flesh, apart from confidence in the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost, have taken upon themselves to do so. The result has ever been, that the lawgiver has become the head of his followers, and his rules their text book and bond of association.

It is plain that we should keep the feast (that is, the Lord's Supper, which is the Church's feast table) with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The efforts of the partakers should be ever towards this holy communion. God only can give the needed wisdom, grace, and patience, required so much in these days of evil and perplexity.

It is a solemn thing to make individual profession, and, if possible, still more solemn by a Church position to involve others by our sins and failures. Happy is it, where all having the sense of responsibility to Christ, seek in all grace to help on the lambs of His flock; and, while careful to maintain the order of His house, they do not at the same time cast away, in the haste of prejudice and of party, the weaklings of His flock; but are found ready sternly to reject all leaven. That the Church of God is a nursery for training up the heavenly family should ever be borne in mind, while seeking to put away all elements injurious to their well-being, and the glory of Christ.

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CHRIST ALONE.—There is none other thing, or person, in heaven or in earth, that can tall and satisfy the goal of that man whom the Holy Ghost has emptied of self, than the Lord Jesus Christ HIMSELF. Religion won't do it. Association with Christians won't do it. The Bible won't do it. Obedience to precepts won't do it. Prayer, faith, repentance, and the most holy life, all say, "it is not in me," and with one voice bid us "go to Joseph," our one Lord Jesus Christ HIMSELF. Reader, What think you of Christ?

Walking in the Truth

WE are not our own. We have been bought with a price—the precious blood of Christ; we are therefore not to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. We are to obey and glorify God, because we are His. He hath given us His Holy Spirit. In the riches of His grace, He passed by us, saw us polluted in our blood, and said, “Live;” He looked upon us, spread His skirt over us and covered our nakedness, aware unto us, entered into covenant with us, thoroughly washed us, and we became His. (Ez. 16:6, &c.) We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus; but let us never forget, “unto good works.” Being now children of God, we should be “obedient children.” We are called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, to “walk as He walked.” We are born again of water and of the Spirit, that we should “walk in newness of life” – “walk in the Spirit.” “We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that we should show forth the excellencies of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

The great abuse that Israel of old made of the words and ordinances of God, was to retain the outward form, and seek their own comfort and ease, without obeying the voice of the Lord. The burden of the prophet’s testimony against Israel was their disobedience. Saul thought it was of little consequence not to slay all the Amalekites and their cattle; he saw no harm in retaining some sheep, a few oxen, and Agag their king; but it was very hateful to God, it was positive disobedience to His holy word, it was self-will, carnal policy, and was evil in the sight of the Lord. Hence the prophet exclaimed, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry; because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.” (1 Sam. 15:22, 23.)

Again, and again, the prophet Jeremiah sounded in the ears of the people, “Ye have not obeyed My voice, saith the Lord.” (Jer. 3:13.) “I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice. . . . but they hearkened not unto Me.” (Jer. 7:21-26.) They obeyed the commandment of Jonadab their father, but they “hearkened not unto Me,” saith the Lord. (Jer. 35:14.) They walked after the imagination of their own hearts, but they obeyed not the Lord. (Jer. 22:21.) Daniel, with chastened soul before God, acknowledged this sin, saying, “We obeyed not Thy voice.” (Dan. 9:14.)

The prophet Zephaniah also charged Israel with not obeying the voice of God, not receiving correction, not trusting in the Lord, and not drawing near unto her God. (Zep. 3:2)

Talking about Jesus may be a sentiment, obeying His word must be a reality; the former may be connected with great profession, while the latter may be scarcely seen. O for more exercise of conscience before God, as to how we deal with the Holy Scriptures, which He hath given, to thoroughly furnish us unto all good works! (2 Tim. 3:16.)

Being not under the law, but under grace, obeying the word of our Lord Jesus Christ is surely our only be coming or happy position. Christ Himself is the perfection of obedience, and we have received His word and Spirit to follow His steps. Let us not deceive ourselves. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. It was Christ's delight to do the will of Him that sent Him, and He says, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." To be only hearers, and not doers of the word, is what our great enemy desires. It is an awful deception, for such think they have got blessing when they have not. It is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass and turning away again; he has beheld something, but has neither tasted, nor enjoyed, nor received any good. In keeping His commandments there is great reward; but let us beware of sentimentality, and of that knowledge which puffeth up. We are not to please ourselves, but to glorify God; not to follow men, but to follow Christ; not to obey human rules and systems, but to obey the word of God; not to walk after our own imaginations, but to walk in the truth. O wretched self-will, vile fancied wisdom, miserable unbelief that pretends to a better path than the leading of the Holy Ghost by the written word!

May God keep us, beloved, abiding in Christ, walking in Christ, bearing faithfully "the testimony" of Christ, waiting for Christ, that we may walk worthy of Him who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory.

“Thy Commandment Is Exceeding Broad.”-No. 8

Psalm 119:96; Hab. 2:4.

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:4.) On such an authority as this, we are not only warranted, but it is our duty to ponder well “every word” of God. “The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” (Ps. 12:6.) The more they are searched into, the brighter they come forth.

The ancient oracle, “The just shall live by his faith,” is adduced by the apostle Paul as corroborative of the doctrine he was teaching on three different occasions; and with such diversity, that the emphasis is laid on different word on each occasion of his reference to this oracle.

He first refers to it in defining what the Gospel is. (Rom. 1:16.) “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

The point is righteousness, “How can man be just with God.” Of old the way of righteousness by works had been “revealed,” and the answer to it was not believing in the revelation, but doing the things prescribed in the revelation. Such was the law. But “the ministry of the prophets,” witnessed that none had attained righteousness in that way, and at the same time pointed to righteousness in another way, “righteousness in the way of faith,” and the answer to it was, believing the record that God gave concerning His Son renouncing the one way of righteousness as utterly impossible, and by faith receiving Him who is the righteousness of God, even His unspeakable Gift. In exemplifying his definition of the gospel (Rom. 3:21, 22), the apostle plainly declares that this way of righteousness was witnessed unto by the prophets. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe.”

The emphatic word in this connection is, “The just,” or the righteous person; and he only is so, who becomes so “by faith.” The righteous in the way of faith shall live, in contradistinction to the law which said the righteous in the way of works shall live. In the context of the prophet, the words are, “Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” This doubtlessly primarily refers to Nebuchadnezzar, or indeed any great potentate, who regards men “as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them, which they take up with the angle and catch them in their net,” as though men were given into their hands, for their sport, or riches, or convenience. Thus their hearts become lifted up, on account of their might, and prowess, and grandeur, as the heart of Nebuchadnezzar was when he said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” There was no uprightness here, no righteousness which God could recognize, but he had regard to the lowly, whose trust was in Him, and saw righteousness there, where man could only see poverty and

misery. The one who exalted himself must be abased, the one who humbled himself would be exalted. But the context morally is of general application. He who prides himself on his integrity, wisdom, or strength, as commending him to God, or causing him to regard others with contempt, whosoever he be, his heart is not “upright in him.” To be right with God rests on an entirely different ground, even dependence on God Himself, for righteousness, wisdom, and strength. If a man prefer his own claim to give him a standing before God, he thereby forces God to try the validity of his claim, and when God does this, He always finds man wanting and come short of His glory. To this the prophets witnessed. To this the history of Job witnesses. Well may Eliphaz say, “Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect?” (Job 22:2, 3.) Or again, Elihu, “If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? or what receiveth He of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.” (Job 35:7, 8.) But it was one thing to prove Job in the wrong in justifying himself, and another to show how righteousness is of God. To this the prophets witnessed; but what they witnessed is now distinctly revealed in “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” Yet even to this day, so innate is the thought in the heart of man, that the power be has, whether of intellect, or morals, to benefit his fellowmen, will commend him to God, that he stumbles at the very threshold, and refuses to acknowledge that righteousness must be in the way of faith. It must come from God to man, instead of being rendered by man to God, because man has been proved to be unable to render it; and if it be of God, it must be received by faith, and that which God presents to us is nothing short of His own Son—the very righteousness of God, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” This is the wisdom of the believer, that he receives Christ Jesus, made unto him of God righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. So that he glories only in the Lord. His heart is upright in him.

The second time in which this oracle is quoted is Gal. 3:11, and in this connection the emphasis appears to be laid on the word “live.” The Galatian churches had found “blessedness” in receiving the Apostle’s testimony unto Jesus and His finished work. On believing in Jesus they had received the Holy Spirit of promise, as the Spirit of adoption. But they were in danger of nullifying the grace of God, and the death of Christ, by giving heed to those who taught “that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” (Acts 15:5.) There was, and is something peculiarly fascinating (Gal. 3:1,) in the adoption of a system of ordinances—the flesh can fully recognize such a system. Human intellect will busily occupy itself in finding out hidden meaning in the ordinances, and it quite falls in with the natural feelings to regard religious ordinances as subserving morality, and conducive to order. This is very apparent in our days; but how much more powerful must the inducement to turn to ordinances have been, when those ordinances were originally of divine appointment. In meeting this peculiar fascination, the apostle dwells largely on his own personal history. Saul the Pharisee was an accomplished and strict religionist. His zeal led him by great discernment to persecute the church, as utterly subversive of legal Judaism. What power was it that wrought so marvelously on him as to cause him to preach that faith which he once destroyed? It was “the revelation of the Son of God in him.” This inward revelation was indeed accompanied by an outward revelation to him; but the outward revelation would not have produced such a momentous change; it struck down and terrified, and convinced the potsherd of the folly of contending with his Maker; but the inward revelation presented an object of dependence to the soul, and made known the saving power of that Name which Saul had

only known before to blaspheme. When the mighty reality that the crucified One was the Lord of glory burst upon his soul, Saul needed nothing farther: he conferred not with flesh and blood, but immediately preached that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and was emancipated from the law, and fleshly religion. Thus born again by faith in Jesus as the Son of God, he had to begin his religious course anew, serving the God of his fathers now in spirit and in truth; and knowing how entirely foreign to this new life communicated to his soul, was the law of commandments contained in ordinances. Through the law he had become dead to the law, that he might live unto God. A system of ordinances, even those of the law itself, would hinder this; it keeps off from God, instead of bringing to God. How jealous was Saul of being thrown into a distance from God, after having been brought nigh to Him by the blood of Jesus. Nothing but seeing that he had no more to do with law and its ordinances than a dead man, and the conscious possession of another life, which had its paramount object, could help him in realized nearness to God. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." This new life, a life derived from the risen Jesus, a life which would only have its full scope in glory, when all its interests and affections would be absorbed in one object, Jesus, the Lamb slain, the grand ordinance of heaven, this life could not now be subject to ordinances.. Those ordinances were well adapted for the flesh and for the world, but they were foreign to the spirit and heaven. This life could only be sustained by faith now on that one Object which it would behold by sight in heaven, "the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." A return to the law and its ordinances would frustrate the grace of God, and nullify the death of Christ, as to any result in blessing to sinners. The doctrine of the cross was imperiled by the attempt to superadd the law to what Christ had done; their danger was great of attempting to be made perfect by the flesh, after having so happily begun in the Spirit. They were in danger of losing the blessing of Abraham, and of bringing themselves under the curse, by thus subjecting themselves to the law; for justification on that ground was impossible; for "the just shall live by faith." And the law is not of faith. A Christian does not live by what he doeth, but by faith in Christ, and by what Christ has done. He who thinks to add to his security in Christ, by that which he himself doeth, is in danger of getting off from the rock to trust to a moving quicksand. How important is it to the stability of our souls not only to be well assured that redemption alone is to be found in the blood of Christ, even remission of sins, but that the life we have received is only nourished by faith in Him from whom we have received it. Jesus is "the bread of life," and "the water of life," and the light of life." All our springs are in Him. "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Jesus lives for us, even as He died for us. Surely "the just shall live by faith."

The third place in which this oracle is referred to is Heb. 10:38; and in this connection it is more directly in harmony with its context in the prophet, and the emphasis is on the word "faith." "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him; but we are not of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for."

Dark and dreary was the season when Habakkuk saw his burden. Everything appeared out of course; "the law slacked, and judgment not going forth." Had God then given up the moral government of the world?—such was his appeal to the Lord Himself. The answer to his appeal

was, that more terrible things were in store; a mighty conqueror and oppressor was to be raised up against God's rebellious people, but "his mind should change and he should offend, imputing this his power unto his god."

The truth bursts on the prophet, that "the Lord had ordained them for judgment, and established them for correction;" but still there is the difficulty, that "He who is of purer eyes than to behold evil" should allow the wicked to devour the man that is more righteous than himself, and that the wicked should so have it his own way, as if men were fishes for him is catch in his net and do with as he liked. Can the righteous God allow this—allow, as it were, men to deify their own power? (See chap. 1:14-17.) The prophet in reply to his arguing is told to "write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." Present circumstances were to be read in the light of the vision of the glory of God. The vision of that glory was "for an appointed time; but at the end it would speak, and not lie." It would not disappoint those who waited for it. It might tarry, but still the word is, "wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." And then follows the announcement: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith." In this connection the emphatic word is faith contradicting appearances, faith the substance of things hoped for. It is faith looking at the things which are unseen. (2 Cor. 4:18.) This faith results in calm composure, holy joy, and peaceful triumph. (Hab. 3:17-19.)

Those addressed in the epistle to the Hebrews had in the early days of their confession of Christ, "dared a great fight of afflictions;" but they had been supported in "holding fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope." (Heb. 3:6.) Things had not changed, the confession of Christ still necessitated the cross, continuous and perhaps increasing trial might endanger relapse, for acquiescence in worldly religion (Judaism) would be deliverance from present trial. Their circumstances were very similar to that of the prophet; righteousness suffering, worldliness triumphing, with a prospect of increasing darkness. The apostle does not say, Write the vision; but, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." They were still to suffer on like the prophet; but they too were to look at the present trial in the light of the coming glory. But there is this happy difference, it is no longer a vision to be waited for, but a person; it is not a distant future—though it tarry, wait for it; but, "For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." His coming, and His coming alone, would bring the expected deliverance; the place of the church is that of endurance up to the end. His coming would place righteousness in the ascendancy; then a king would reign in righteousness. The coming of the Lord Jesus will solve every question; His manifestation will bring every thing to light. "Now the just shall live by faith," not by sight; we do not judge according to appearances but we judge righteous judgment; for the Holy Ghost Himself, the Spirit of judgment (Is. 11), enables us to judge of all things with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. As truth-doers we come to Him as "the light," and form our judgments accordingly. The blessed hope set before us, even the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to receive us unto Himself, enables us to see present things in a light in which no other can discern them. How important is faith in this connection, that is, in connection with our hope. But the danger is great of drawing back and subsiding into the religious decorum of the day, forming our standard by the conventional religion or morals of the day, instead of by our hope. Solemn indeed is the word, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Our God is a jealous God, and is especially jealous of our being turned aside from the honor that

cometh from God only, which is Christ in us the hope of glory, to something of present honor. May we join with the apostle in uprightness of heart, saying, as it is our privilege, "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe (but of faith), to the saving of the soul. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for." May we exult with the prophet, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places."

Himself

THE following are the passages in the New Testament where the word Himself occurs with reference to the Lord Jesus. What a rich cluster of the fruit of the land do they present! "An exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" What bread to strengthen our hearts! What wine to cheer us! Let us mark also the beautiful variety of the appellations of our blessed Lord, embracing many of His choicest names connected with these verses in which Himself is mentioned. We have for instance Christ—Jesus—Christ Jesus—the man Christ Jesus—Jesus Christ—our Lord Jesus Christ—the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ—the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. The Son—the Son of God—the Lord—the Lord of Peace. May the Lord give us a relish for the sincere milk of His word; and thus lead us to Himself!

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Christ Jesus—He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim. 2:13.)

Christ Jesus—made Himself of no reputation. (Phil. 2:7.) Humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8.)

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Christ pleased not Himself. (Rom. 15:3.)

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, of any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25, 26.)

Christ hath loved us and given Himself for us. (Eph. 5:2.)

Christ—who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Pet. 2:24..)

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The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ—gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Tit. 2:14.)

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Our Lord Jesus Christ—gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. (Gal. 1:4.)

The Son of God—loved me, and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20.)

The man Christ Jesus—gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Tim. 2:6.)

The Son—when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb. 1:3.)

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Jesus—needeth not daily to offer up sacrifice: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself. (Heb. 7:27.)

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Christ—through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. (Heb. 9:14.)

Christ—now once in the end of the world, hath appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26).

Christ—is our peace—having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. (Eph. 2:15.)

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The Saviour—the Lord Jesus Christ—shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. (Phil. 3:21.)

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The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you. (2 Th. 3:16.)

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The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. (1 Th. 4:16.)

## Faith and Feeling

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“WHERE the word of a king is, there is power;” and Christ is the power of God, and the Word of God. You cannot separate Christ and the written word. He is Himself the very essence, life, and core of it. But what is Christ to us? What the word of Christ, without the Spirit of Christ to open up to our souls that word which testifies of Him? We cannot, we dare not separate them. The word of God, Christ the word, the Spirit of Christ, must go together. The word and Spirit testify of Christ. Christ declares the Father; and he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. (John 14:9; 1:18; 5:39; 15:26.) No man cometh to the Father but by Him; and all who come to Christ are drawn to Him by the Father. (John 14:6; 6:44); and Jesus says, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23.) But we shall know nothing of the power of the word as a hammer to break the heart, as a salve to heal the wound which it has made, but as the Holy Ghost applies it, revealing through it Jesus to and in our consciences, as the Word whom God has sent to heal us (Ps. 107:20), originating at the same time faith to receive it. This is no miserable, dry, heartless doctrine: it is health and cure; it is a matter of inward experience, an experience inwrought by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us, (John 14:16, 17; 1 John 2:27,) and on whom we are hourly dependent to keep us, through the word, abiding in Christ by living faith; and where there is a measure of such experience, learnt in such a way, there will be, there must be, corresponding feelings. Tell us there is no feeling in joy, no feeling in peace: we say there is. He who has known the bitterness of a guilty conscience, who has felt the arrows of the Almighty within drinking up his spirit, who has had the terrors of God set in array against him (Job 6:4), and been holden in cords of affliction (Job 36:8), no matter from what cause; be it known guilt after a profession of faith, or bad and legal teaching on an ill-instructed, self-righteous conscience, such an one knows what misery is; he has felt it; and now let Christ be revealed to that soul, by the Holy Ghost, as the ONE who hath “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26), let him learn how He Himself hath made peace through the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20), that Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6), and that by Him, whom God hath raised from the dead, all who believe ARE justified from all things (Acts 13:39), and that just as he is, without one plea but that Jesus died for such, and that He bids him come, saying, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37.) I say, let such a poor miserable soul be drawn to Christ, and have the Holy Ghost witnessing in his conscience to the efficacy of the precious blood, as that which has met all his responsibilities to God, as his Creator and Lawgiver, as that which perfectly answers for him, cleansing him from all sin, and easing him from all sin’s bitter gnawings, and will he not feel something? Tell such an one that there is no feeling in believers, and he will tell you that there is “joy and peace in believing” (Rom. 15:13), and that he has felt it, and that he speaks of that which he does know, and testifies of that which he has tasted and handled. We do not say you must feel before you believe, or that your feeling is the seal and proof of that being true which is declared to you. When we believe we set to our seal that God is true, we add our “Amen” to it; but it was true before we believed; yea, it is the truth which has generated faith in the hearer; let God be true, though every one who hears were to reject the word; but some do and shall believe, for

His word shall not return to Him void. We are to publish SALVATION, and leave the results with God, neither guarding it by conditions to be kept by the creature, nor by a certain amount of inward experience in joy or sorrow to be realized. We may despise feelings, and speak lightly of doctrines. It is quite true that doctrines are not Christ, and feelings are not faith; but let us take heed lest we despise what God cloth highly esteem, for doctrines are taught by Him, and feelings will be experienced, in a greater or less degree, whenever the truth is received in the love of it. A Christian whose head is more exercised than his heart, believing, of course, has life, and he will go on his way without much feeling himself or sympathy with others. We may and ought indeed to condemn that style of preaching which makes so much of feelings, which seeks to delineate so accurately, and does so narrowly analyze the inward workings of faith and unbelief, till the poor soul is driven to look within for Christ, instead of to the right hand of God, where He who died and rose again now is, and is there, too, because He has glorified the Father on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do (John 17:4); but we must equally condemn the dry, theoretic setting forth of an accurately stated gospel, which bolsters up the hearers with a notional assent, while an incessant exhortation to submit to this, to obey that, and do the other thing, succeeds in molding into shape a lifeless lump of self-righteous, captious morality.

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Beloved, let us rest in the bosom of the God of peace, and the peace of God shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. The Lord of peace Himself rests there. All the toil is over. The waves which overwhelmed the Rock on which we build, are all gone back, and our Rock is within the veil. Jehovah is our rock; exalted be the God of the Rock of our salvation.

END OF THIRD VOLUME.

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