

CRUMBS FOR THE LORD'S LITTLE ONES VOLUME 4

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A collection of articles and writings by H.H. Snell from Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones Volume 4, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

51 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones Volume 4
1. Eph. 4:4
2. Thoughts on Jesus, the Faithful Witness
3. Levi; or Mercy Rejoicing Against Judgment
4. Gen. 3; John 8
5. Jude 11
6. Christ, or the Church?
7. Behold, I Come Quickly!
8. 1 Kings 18:17, &c
9. No. 1. The Sorrows of the Lamb of God
10. Joy and Conflict
11. Gen. 42
12. Genesis 22
13. Service to Christ
14. Jude ver. 11
15. Gone Before
16. Ex. 12
17. The Sorrows of Jesus on the Cross
18. Jude, verse 11
19. Fragments
20. Worship
21. The Ways of God
22. Ex. 10:24 to end
23. Gen. 22
24. Making Ready for the Marriage
25. Grace and Peace
26. No. 3, Abraham and Isaac
27. Deliverance from the Law, and Liberty in Christ
28. One Thing
29. A Practically Good Conscience
30. Ex. 15:23
31. John 20:10-21
32. Haggai. 1:5, 7
33. Isa. 40:8
34. What Think Ye of Christ?
35. Psa. 22
36. Matthew 11:27 through 30
37. Mic. 5:7
38. 1 Kings 19; Nehemiah 1

39. "Forbearing One Another in Love."
40. On the Ministry of the Word
41. Testimony of a Dying Saint
42. The Righteousness of God by Faith
43. Ex. 22:27; Deut. 24:10
44. Acts 1:8
45. The Way of Faith, and Backsliding
46. Exodus 12, 13
47. 2 Sam. 9, 19
48. The Field of the Slothful
49. On Luke 1
50. Mark 5:33

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones Volume 4

Eph. 4:4

HUMAN hopes are proverbially fallacious, often never realized; or, if realized, often ending in disappointment. But “the hope of our calling” is most certain, and can never be disappointed. It is, moreover, both definite and precise, so that in the midst of trial we can “rejoice in hope.” The hope of our calling is one, and the same to all who are called of God. Connected with, and flowing from this one hope, there are many things most legitimately “hoped for;” but these very things are themselves best realized, when “the one hope of our calling” is kept vividly before the soul.

This hope is immediately linked with our calling, and our calling immediately linked with the purpose of God. Hence the certainty of hope.

The apostle prays (Eph. 1:18,) that we “may know what is the hope of His calling;” that is, what God has called us unto, as well as called us from. It is a hope worthy of God, and which the highest thoughts of man never could have conceived. (1 Cor. 2:9.) Human thoughts must necessarily be grounded on what is possible with man; but what heart could conceive the thought, that God should have called any man “unto His kingdom and glory:” yet such is the hope of our calling. (1 Thess. 2:12.) But it is well to see how every step unto this blessed consummation is so linked together by God, as to preclude all doubt and uncertainty; and to give to the one hope of our calling such a fixedness as to render it secure from all contingencies. “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

This, then, is the one hope of our calling, when we regard ourselves. Every one now called of God into the knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ, shall be made like Him in glory. It is the purpose of God to bring many sons to glory; and in order to this, there was “a needs-be” to make Jesus, the Captain of their salvation, perfect through sufferings. “The Son” could have challenged admission through the everlasting gates, (Psa. 24) in His own indefeasible title as the King of glory. But since it was settled in the eternal counsels of the Godhead to bring many eons to glory, it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to bring the Captain of their salvation to glory through sufferings, in order that His sufferings might be to them a pathway to glory. Jesus went the way of suffering■even suffering the death of the cross■unto the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, that He might be the way, the open living way, for the many sons to reach the same place which their Captain has reached, to be with Him and to be like Him. This is perfection. This is our hope. And this our hope is thus linked with the sufferings of Christ. It is only as we realize what Christ suffered for us, and the divine suitability that He should so suffer, that the one hope of our calling is maintained without wavering. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26.) The hope of being among the “many sons” brought to glory, among the “many brethren,” of whom Jesus now at the right hand of God is the First-born, has its strong warrant, not only that such is the purpose of God with respect to those whom He has called, but that Jesus is now where He is, because He has “by Himself purged our sins.” (Heb. 1:3.) Look

at the perfection of Jesus in this aspect. Perfect in Himself, even the delight of His Father; the One in whom the Father could rest with perfect complacency. Jesus has another perfection. He was made perfect through sufferings, and has reached a summit of glory in this way, which He is enabled to open as an object of hope to others. "Continuing in the grace of God," calmly reposing on that once finished purgation of sin by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God; the "one hope of our calling" of being with Jesus, being like Him, and beholding His glory, fits in most suitably with such a standing. But if we go a step further, and look at Jesus where He is now, inside the veil, how greatly does this view of Jesus confirm our hope. He is there as "the Forerunner." He is called up to the right hand of God, because He has finished the work of purging our sins, and there He takes the place of the Forerunner. With the eye steadily fixed on Jesus in this character, our hope becomes as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." He is there for us, and He is there to be followed by us; for to be with Him there is the one hope of our calling. The holiest of all is now our place of worship, because God has called us with the hope of being with Him there forever. We draw near now on the certain warrant, that our hope of being there will never be disappointed. Hence the connection (Heb. 10:22, 23.) between drawing near with a true heart, and holding fast the profession of our hope (see Greek) without wavering; for He is faithful that promised.

But the Lord Jesus Himself most touchingly and distinctively teaches us what the one hope of our calling is. He speaks from His own heart to ours; making, so to speak, the hope to be mutual, even His as well as ours. "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The earnest of this hope in the presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter we have now for our comfort; for ere we are in the mansions prepared for us, we have this sustaining promise. "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 [mansion] with him." That which gives such distinctiveness to the one hope of our calling, is that it is personal, not circumstantial. It is the hope that a Person deeply interested in us, will not have the full joy of His heart till we are with Him where He is. It is the hope, therefore, of being forever with a Person who abidingly loves us, and whom we love in return; in whose presence there is fullness of joy. We can understand, at least negatively, what rest, cessation from conflict, and absence of all care about this "earthly tabernacle house" must be. We can understand, by contrast, the immense difference between living in a world where confession of Jesus necessitates the cross, and being in a sphere where His name is universally acknowledged. The thought of being in glory, or of reigning with Christ, is more vague and indefinite; but to be with Jesus because He desires to have us with Him, is a hope that must touch the heart of every one who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. The Lord touches on the same topic in John 16, "Ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Of this, again, we have the earnest in the presence of the Holy Ghost. Jesus knows what He Himself is. He was waited for by a feeble remnant, before His incarnation, as "the consolation of Israel;" and in the days of His flesh, He Himself was everything to His disciples. When they are toiling in rowing, He comes to them, their toil ceases, and immediately they are at the desired haven. (John 6:20, 21.) "I will see you again"■that is all, nothing else was needed. The blessing did not consist so much in what He would do for them, as in what He Himself was to them. Their life, their light, their joy, their sun, their shield, their exceeding great reward would be with them when they saw Him again, and that joy never should be taken from them. Again, how conspicuous is the personal element in the wonderful intercourse of the Lord with His Father.

(John 17) It is not enough for Him to say, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them (John 17:22); but He adds," Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. "The blessedness of such a request can alone be known to the heart that delights in the honor of Jesus. The human thought of blessedness is rather brought out in the request of the mother of Zebedee's children." 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 Thy left, in Thy kingdom." (Matt. 20:21.) Our own personal glory is a legitimate object of hope—it is that to which we are predestinated. But to "behold the King is His beauty," to see Jesus "as He is," to see everything in Him to which we have so feebly and failingly confessed most illustriously displayed—to find that His delight is to exhibit to others the glory He Himself has given to us, whilst our joy is to behold the glory which the Father has given Him—what hope can be more blessed or more glorious? And to know that His given glory is in consequence of His having loved us and given Himself for us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, makes it a hope in which we can rejoice. The hope of our calling thus becomes very distinct, and formative of our character. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Can our hearts desire anything higher or better?

"We are saved by hope," (Rom. 8:24) but there is no uncertainty in it, it is only that that which is already ours is not manifested, it is only that God's purpose is not publicly displayed. To meet the legal tendencies of the Galatians, the Apostle writes, "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." We do not hope for righteousness—that is already ours, even the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus, —but we wait for the hope to which such a righteousness is entitled; and who can tell the amount of its blessedness? The Thessalonians are set by the Apostle in the posture of "waiting for God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." It is no Jewish hope of a Messiah to do something for their deliverance, but the hope of the presence of One whom God hath raised from the dead, because He hath finished that work by which we are delivered from the wrath to come. Even the appearing of the Lord Jesus as the Righteous Judge is held out to us as an appearing we can love. (2 Tim. 4:8.) Will not everything in that day be adjudicated in reference to Himself? and will it not be the joy of our hearts when His appearing shall vindicate our confession of His name? The saving grace of God now made known to us is directly linked with our hope, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us." (Tit. 2.)

The apostle Peter exhorts us to "hope to the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:18.) Yes, the grace we already know in pardoning love, in the gift of righteousness, in prevailing intercession, and in shepherdly care, we shall then know in glory, glory to us will be grace, for grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. How shall we then, in the highest sense, "behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!"

In the same line of thought the apostle Jude writes to us. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." To have obtained mercy is now to be a saint, and a vessel already prepared unto glory. (Rom. 9:23.) Is it not a sweet thought to us that glory shall come to us in the shape of mercy, and whilst we are in it as our element, still the mercy that has brought us there shall be our theme. God is rich in mercy, and He has riches of

glory, and these riches of glory shall make known how rich He is in mercy. “Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

The beloved disciple connects the manner of love already bestowed upon us, with the one hope of our calling. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be (or what we shall be hath not yet been manifested): but we know that when HE shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in Him, [i.e. in Christ,] purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”

With such a hope, if He says, “Surely I come quickly,” shall not our hearts respond■ “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus?”

Thoughts on Jesus, the Faithful Witness

THE man who judges of God by Creation finds it an insufficient revelation; it tells out something of His power and goodness, and something of the Fall. He who judges of God by His providential dealings will often be mistaken, and be wondering why God does not interfere with this or that. Jesus alone is "The Faithful Witness." He ever witnessed of God's grace to sinners. God's purpose was most faithfully witnessed to by Jesus, when He was accused of eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. Jesus shrank not from bearing the reproach for us, but how often we shrink from being reproached for Christ!

God was faithfully witnessed to by Jesus, when He took little children up in His arms ■ "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." He witnessed for God when the adulteress was brought to Him, in exposing the hidden sin of the hypocrites who accused her, and chewing mercy to her as soon as she stood self-condemned. Man always hires for himself those who possess a good character, but Jesus sought for and accepted those who were cast out ■ the blind man, &c. In whatever circumstances man stood, Jesus was the "Faithful Witness." He was not secluded in a palace, but walked about, just giving God's thoughts about all.

It is exceedingly humbling to know Jesus as the only Faithful Witness to test ourselves by. "How would He have acted in every condition?" This is very humbling. Jesus witnessed that God never expected any good from anything here. The man said, "Good Master." The Lord knew he was applying men's thoughts of goodness to Him: he was not judging any one, or himself, in the light. The Lord touches the spring that discloses to the man himself ■ that he has a hidden god. "Sell all, and give." No, his heart had another god.

John the Baptist was faithful in a measure. He came seeking for righteousness, and, as he could not get it among men, he went out into the wilderness ■ a plain proof that righteousness was not to be found. Jesus came not to seek righteousness, but to show grace; therefore He could come into the haunts of men, for He came to manifest grace. You can never get into a condition too bad for Christ to come into. However low, however fallen, He can come to you; not to keep you there, but to help you out, for forgiveness wins the heart, as well as clears the conscience. We ought not to be under Satan's power, for we are one with the Lord, and He has overcome Satan. He met him in his stronghold, even in death. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings; but let us remember that Christ met Satan in death, and triumphed over him in resurrection.

If I walk in the flesh, of course Satan gets power over me; for walking in the flesh is neither death nor resurrection. What a triumph over Satan, to present man to God in an altogether new position ■ risen! I must keep in that posture, or Satan gets claiming is e. If I simply believe this, God seals me with His Spirit—sealed, for how long? "Until the day of redemption." We should take God's word simply. Some people say, "I want to be more meek, gentle, &c., then I shall be happier." The Lord puts the varieties of the fruit of the Spirit in their right place, when He says, first "love, joy, peace," afterward "gentleness," &c.; for the fruit of the Spirit is not the result of my work, but of Christ's work. If I believe this work of Christ, that He must have done all for man could have

done nothing, (a dead thing could not have given itself life,) the Spirit takes up His abode in me, and the fruit of the Spirit flows out. When Christ is presented to you, do your hearts respond in happy unhesitating confidence, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," &c.? You must come to this, if you see yourselves vile; and if you do not see this, it is because you are seeking to hide your sins from yourselves. You cannot hide them from God; so the sooner you know your own nothingness the better, for then you will speedily learn God's all-sufficiency, through the work of His dear Son, as taught by His Spirit.

SANCTIFICATION. ■What a word is that, "He that sanctifieth"■and again, "that He might sanctify the people with His own blood"■again, "we are sanctified through the offering," &c. What virtue is there in HIM, and in His BLOOD, that the whole elect of God should be both saved and sanctified■cleansed and consecrated to God! And if He so felt our sins when bearing them for us before God, surely He must now rejoice in presenting us before the Father holy and without blame in Himself. (Heb. 9:24; 4:14; Ex. 28:12, 29, 38.)

Levi; or Mercy Rejoicing Against Judgment

“GOD is greater than man; why dost thou strive against Him? for He giveth not account of any of His matters.” (Job 33:12, 13.) And yet He frequently explains Himself—sometimes exercising our faith and silencing our objections, by saying, “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” And at other times lifting up the veil and enabling us to scan His ways, so as to elicit a burst of admiring and adoring praise. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

There are ways of God which He has prescribed to us, in which He is imitable by us. “Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God as dear children.” And there are ways in which He is sovereign—His own prerogative ways, in which He acts for His own Name’s sake. “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” In this we cannot imitate God. He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” He must in the strictest sense be arbitrary, or He is not God. But it is not for man to prescribe to himself his own will as his rule, because in doing so he affects to be God. The good pleasure which God has purposed in Himself, He will so accomplish, as to show that “He is good, His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth from generation to generation.”

There are ways of God made known to us as His ways, and yet inscrutable to us in their mode of operation, but often discovered in their result. Of these ways there are two which, though very distinct, sometimes lead to the same end. First, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee.” Second, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,” and “mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” These ways of God receive large illustration from the early Scriptures down to the crucifixion of Christ, in which the wrath of man was made to praise Him; as it is written, “For of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done;” while at the same time, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name, beginning at Jerusalem,” furnishes a most illustrious instance of grace abounding over sin.

The wrath of man raised “a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.” But how manifestly does the wrath of man praise God. “Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” Again, the wrath of Jewish zealots would have compassed the death of the apostle Paul. Possibly there may be traces of human infirmity, of policy or expediency, found in the conduct of the apostle; but the Lord is supreme alike over the wrath of man, and the failings of His servant; saying to His servant, “Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” In his imprisonment at Rome, the apostle could calmly trace the Lord’s way, saying, “I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” “Surely the wrath of man shall praise God.”

Let us turn to Levi. He is linked with Simeon in the atrocious massacre of the Shechemites. (Gen. 34) Jacob, when he was a dying, tells these two brethren what should befall them in the last days. "Simeon and Levi are brethren: instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." (Gen. 49:5, 6, 7.) Such is the language of paternal indignation. Jacob felt that his honor had been compromised by the rashness of his sons, and his "name made to stink among the inhabitants of the land." Is this all the legacy the father can bequeath to his sons? It is all that can be done in righteousness; but God can turn even this curse to a blessing, as He did in after days that of Balaam. (Deut. 23:5.) He can make this cruel wrath to praise Him, and mercy to rejoice against judgment. As for Simeon: they had their inheritance within the tribe of Judah, (Josh. 19: 9,) as if they were hardly reckoned as a distinct tribe of Israel. They were "divided in Jacob," an instance of "the severity of God." But to be scattered in Israel, as Levi was, eventually proved their highest honor. When Moses, the man of God, blesses the children of Israel before his death, judgment is indeed remembered in the omission of any mention of Simeon. But how mercy rejoices against judgment in the largeness of the blessing pronounced on Levi! It is Moses, as king in Jeshurun, speaking in the tone of royal grace, and not as the indignant father. Blessed instruction indeed! Whilst "the Father, without respect of person, judgeth according to every man's work" during our sojourn here, He still, as the God of all grace, steadily pursues His purpose of blessing; scourging "in severity," yet in love and faithfulness, and abounding in grace over the very sin for which He has chastened His children.

But to return to Levi. "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy word, and kept Thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law: they shall put intense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar. (Deut. 33:8-10.)

The father's judgment had scattered them in Israel; but this very fact was, by the grace of God, overruled to their honor, for the Lord was their inheritance. "But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance." (Num. 18:24.) But besides this honor, their very scattering in judgment was overruled in mercy to make them a blessing to their brethren, for by this very means they were enabled to teach Jacob the judgments of the Lord, and Israel His statutes, which they could not have done, had they had a distinct portion of the land assigned to them, as was the case with the other tribes.

The acknowledgment of God as "a great King." acting in royal grace, not only throws light on His ways; but cheers while it humbles and softens our souls. Whilst we feel His "severity," it is well to acknowledge His "goodness." The ready way of man when he feels the severity of God, is either to harden himself against God, as Pharaoh did; or to fret against Him, as Israel: "It shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward." (Isa. 8:21.) But when the soul is truly humbled under the mighty hand of God, He Himself lifts it up. (1 Peter 5:6.) The severity has wrought godly sorrow unto salvation or

deliverance. Then the severity itself is seen in the light of mercy and faithfulness. God is justified, and His goodness becomes the prominent feature in His dealings with us. Fretfulness is exchanged for praise. Humiliating scattering is turned to the account of more enlarged testimony to the gospel of the grace of God; while those who preach it, partake more of it in preaching it, by their deeper experience of their own need of that grace which they preach to others.

Gen. 3; John 8

THE same great moral is continually exhibiting itself in the great action of human life. Distance of time makes no difference. The energies at work are still the same. There is the way of God, and the way of Satan; the principles of light and of darkness.

It is instructive to mark this; to notice how the most distant scenes of action in the book of God are quickened by the same instincts and energies. Thus, in John 8, we find Gen. 3, again; the great opposing elements of the garden of Eden taking their several course, and doing their different work, in the temple at Jerusalem four thousand years after.

The serpent, or the serpent's seed, is in this solemn scene, and exactly in the old character. The serpent had found a pure creature in the garden, and had corrupted and destroyed her; and then, did what he could to destroy the One who had undertaken her cause. He had murdered the woman, and conceiving enmity to her Seed, was to bruise His heel. After which pattern his seed in John 8, seek the full ruin of the poor adulteress, and then also the life of Jesus, because He had taken up her cause, and the cause of all such ruined sinners. He had done the works of the Father,—healing the poor cripple at Bethesda; He had now spoken the words of the Father, by His pardoning voice shielding the adulteress from the fiery anger of the law; but on these accounts they hated Him, and sought His life, accomplishing in themselves the way and character of the serpent.

And still further. The serpent who entered the garden had worked by a lie. The weapon in his murderous hand was a lie. And so here: the serpent's seed are found utterly destitute of truth. Jesus was speaking the truth, as He tells them again and again. (vss. 14, 37, 45, 47.) Just as the Lord God was speaking it, when in the garden, He told of death upon the eating of the tree. But the Jews do not understand Jesus. They have no faculty to comprehend the language of truth. "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My words." So deeply, so thoroughly, so awfully were they departed from the power of the light and truth of God.

Thus do they indeed take the place of the seed of the serpent in his two characters expressed at the beginning, so that the Lord has only to say to them, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him; when he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it."

But again. In the garden man destroyed himself, and then hid away from the presence of God. But the voice of promise, the glad tidings about the woman's Seed, drew him forth; and Adam walked again in "the light of life," calling his wife "the mother of all living;" and receiving from God's own hand the pledge or seal of righteousness by faith. And so in John 8. The poor adulteress is a self-ruined sinner. She is detected and sentenced to death. She is silent; but she hears, like Adam, the voice of the Son of God, the woman's Seed; and she is at peace, and walks forth again in "the light of life." That voice had again overthrown the serpent, or the serpent's seed. There was enmity

between it and them; between the woman's Seed and the serpent's seed, according to the promise. And, like Adam in the garden, the poor adulteress finds life, where she deserved and might have expected death.

In this, also, the scene in the garden of Eden stands revived or reflected in the scene in the temple at Jerusalem. Four thousand years have made no difference. The moral energies, the principles of light and darkness, are the same in the world's infancy or age, in the earth's eastern or western borders, I may say. These similitudes are very exact. But so also in Jesus, the Son of God, the Seed of the woman. As we read of Him, so we see Him, "the same yesterday, and today, and for eves."

In Gen. 3, the promised Seed of the woman is evidently from God, for the sinner, and against the serpent. And such are, most blessedly and most dearly, the relationships which the Lord Jesus fills and assumes in all the action and argument of John 8. He is God's provision for dead and ruined slayers, in defiance of all the malice and wrath of the many.

And further. He is this, at all personal cost. The serpent was to bruise His heel, according to Genesis 3; and the serpent's seed, according to John 8, was "to lift Him up," ■the very same thing as bruising His heel. (See vs. 28.)

But, further still. Though bruised, He was to get the victory, and bruise the head of the serpent, according to Gen. 3. And so in John 8, He lets the Jews know, that the continual resistance of Him would be their doom and final destruction; that it would prove, as another scripture expresses it, a kicking "against the pricks," or a bringing of utter ruin on themselves by the very enmity they vented against Him.

And, finally. He was their only hope, (see vs. 24;) as, in the garden, fig-leaves were insufficient, and there was no return to life by the way of the cherubim and their flaming sword, but all rested in the promised Seed of the woman. But that one hope was enough, for Adam and the convicted adulteress walked again in the light of life, or the presence of God.

One other thing suggests itself from vs. 52, a secret of the deepest interest to our souls, that the Seed of the woman is none less than the "I AM," Jehovah Himself; God, though manifest in the flesh; God, though as son of man, born of a woman; God and man in the same promised Christ. "Verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." And thus, at the close of a long and trying conflict with the Jews, the Lord announces His high personal glory as Jehovah. And they so understand Him, for they immediately deal with Him as they would with one who had dared to blaspheme the unutterable name. "Then took they up stones to cast at Him." But that was not the way or the moment for the heel of the woman's Seed to be bruised; and, therefore, "Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

What a tale of His grace and glory!

Jude 11

THE fourth chapter of Genesis is of very painful interest. The silence in the narrative of the childhood and training of Cain and Abel is of itself significant. After mention of their birth and occupations, they are introduced to our notice as worshippers. It is on this point that the Spirit of God fixes our attention. Here the first stage of "the way of Cain" commences. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." "Cain was a tiller of the ground;" he had toiled hard and sweated his brow to eat his food and to present his offering. But there was no recognition in his offering wherefore it was that he ate his meat in the sweat of his brow. There was no acknowledgment of sin in the way in which he came before God. He acted as though he thought God was bound to accept the best he could give. He was on wrong terms with God. Sin had come into the world, and God could not accept an offering from man as a sinner, till the sinner was personally reconciled to God. The way of God is first to accept the person (Eph. 1:6), and then to accept his work. The way of Cain is to make his own work the ground of the acceptance of his person. He offers the best he has, he does the best he can, and then he is indignant if God regards him not.

"The way of Cain" is further illustrated by the case of Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Such is the after-comment of the Holy Ghost on His previous narrative. "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fatlings thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." "By faith Abel offered." God's word had gone forth, that the sentence of death was passed on matt, and the ground cursed for his sake; and Abel in his offering acknowledged this truth, ere death had actually asserted its presence. By faith, therefore, Abel in his offering acknowledged both the sentence of death, and the necessity of mediation. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." "The way of Cain" is to ignore the fact, that sin has made fearful and impassable separation between man and God; and to act as if man could approach God with acceptance apart from mediation. And further, "the way of Cain" is anger against God Himself for graciously accepting a sinner in His own appointed way, and envy against the sinner so accepted. The eye of Cain is evil, because God is good. "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Remonstrance, gracious remonstrance, on the part of the Lord Himself, fails to remove the evil eye of Cain; and though the Lord Himself opens to him the way of acceptance, he will not "submit" to it. "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." This is the first chapter in the sad history of religious persecution, and of man's hatred of the way of grace. It has been followed by successive chapters, so that "the way of Cain" is a dark thread in human history, connecting the earliest age of man with the closing scene of the present dispensation.

Does not our Lord mark very prominently "the way of Cain" in "the elder brother?" (Luke 15) His father had graciously received back the long-lost prodigal; the fatted calf was killed; all were merry in the house. "Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry and would not go in: therefore came his father out and intreated him." It is "the way of Cain." "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?"

Again, was not the Lord Jesus Himself the Abel of His day, and "the chief priests and elders" the Cain? Sagacity in Pilate could detect that "for envy they had delivered Jesus." God's approval of Jesus (Acts 2:22) made them wroth, and their countenances fell, for it stamped vanity on their religious pretensions. It was to the scribes and Pharisees so exactly walking in "the way of Cain," that the Lord Jesus uttered the withering denunciations of Matt. 23; and thus He concluded them "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers.... That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

The same "way" we find in the persecution of Stephen; and Saul the Pharisee, who had so long walked in "the way of Cain," but had been snatched from it by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus marks his countrymen as walking in that "way," "who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thess 2:15, 16.)

To trace the way of Cain would be to go through the dark pages of the history of the nations professing Christianity; but it is well to notice that Jude the apostle, presents "the way of Cain" as one of the characteristics of the last days.

But there is a second stage "in the way of Cain" very worthy of consideration. "He went out from the presence of the Lord." He withdrew from the only source of satisfaction. His soul felt the void; and he tries to fill it from another source. "He builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch." There Cain stands at the head of that long line, reaching from his day even unto our own, of those who "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen." Man, "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him," vainly "rejoices in the works of his own hands." But he is not satisfied; the aching void is not filled; for nothing but the presence of Him from whom Cain went out can satisfy. It is the glory of God in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone meets the need of man as a sinner and a creature. In the deep knowledge of what He Himself is, Jesus says, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

The family of Cain, like their father, "out of the presence of the Lord," followed on in his "way." "They sought out many inventions;" but they returned not to God. The useful and ornamental arts are to be traced up to Cain's descendants, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal Cain. These arts may indeed conduce to make human life bearable, or enjoyable, if conscience can be lulled, but they do not satisfy.

"The way of Cain" finds its full manifestation in the Babylon of the Apocalypse; so marvelously does the Spirit of God connect together the earliest and latest history of man. Everything is found in Babylon which conduces to ease, convenience, luxury, and the exaltation of man; but "in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (See

Rev. 18) The highest state of civilization, and utter hatred of God and contempt of His grace, meet together in Babylon. "Come out of her, My people, that ye receive not of her plagues," and find your joy in that "city which hath foundations," which has "the glory of God," and where the presence of "God and the Lamb" are the all-satisfying and everlasting portion of all its citizens.

THE LAMB OF GOD. ■Our shelter from the wrath of God is the blood of the Lamb. (Ex. 12:13; Ep. 1:7.) Our food, at all times, the flesh and blood of the Lamb "roast with fire." (Ex. 12:8; Jo. 6:56.) We overcome all our enemies by the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 12:11.)

'They flourish as the water'd herb,

Who keep the LAMB in sight.'

Christ, or the Church?

IT is sadly possible for such a question as that with which I have headed these remarks virtually to have a place in the mind. We may be so occupied, I may say, so selfishly occupied, with Christ, as to have little concern for His many members. It is, in fact, what we all of us have known, more or less, and legitimately known, while the question was as to personal security from the wrath to come. The soul under a sense of sin can have no thought hardly but for itself; but when once Christ has been revealed by the Holy Ghost as all our salvation, and that some of the trials connected with the confession of His name are experienced, especially such trials as spring from our fellow Christians, as Paul says, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28), we are tempted to shut ourselves up, to leave all this in the very fretfulness of our hearts, to take its chance, to be indifferent to the sorrows and perplexities of our brethren, and be so selfishly occupied with Christ, as though we were not members one of another. This, I am sure, is wrong. Whatever interests Christ ought to interest us, and if we have received from God any truth that has been overlooked, we should seek to walk in it, at every cost. We have been gathered out of the world to Christ. He is the mold into which everything that will stand must fit. To Him we are called to be subject as Son over His own house, whose house are we. His word contains everything we want for direction as to the way in which we are to behave ourselves in His house; and nothing should be allowed by us which either practically denies that the Church is "one body," or, that it is the place where the Holy Ghost claims free action to suggest, control, and direct. Our calling is a heavenly one; our place of worship is in heaven, into which we have liberty of access, at all times, by the blood of Jesus. (Heb. 10) The way is a narrow one, and, in one sense, becomes narrower day by day; but as light from God shines thereon, and in the power of the Holy Ghost we walk by faith in that path which has been cast up for us in Christ, we prove that it is a wealthy place and a pleasant way. Sin has been rolled off the conscience, and the peace of God rules in the heart, for Jesus is there; and our allegiance to Him demands from us a laying aside of every weight, and a jealous guard over His name. Downright heresy is often more easy to deal with, and less dangerous, than liberalism in things concerning the Christ of God, and the walk of faith in the house of God.

But is it not possible to be jealously watchful over the integrity of the truth, and the holiness of the Church, while Christ Himself is really excluded, for the time being, from the mind? May not these things be paramount, and CHRIST HIMSELF have the second place in our esteem? yea, be depreciated in one of His members who loves Him, and walks with Him; while the creature, the mere flesh in another, is exalted, and drawn to our bosom, because his light and zeal lead him in the same path with ourselves, while little savor of Christ sweetens our intercourse. Oh! my brethren, can we be so deluded, so ignorant of our hearts, as to suppose that such things could not be? Too easily, indeed, do we know that the mind of a Christian may be so taken up with the things concerning the Church of God, and with the discipline of His house, as practically to forget and deny His lordship on whose shoulder the government is. If we find anything, however good in its place, taking us away from Christ, it must be the devil's doing, working on our self-important,

legal hearts. The mind may get so filled with the responsibility of the Christian as to forget, yea, even to deny the responsibility of the Church's Head; we may be so scrupulously, self-righteously careful about our walk, as to get away from Christ. It is therefore important to have it kept uppermost in our minds and the Holy Ghost alone can do it that it is by grace we are saved from first to last; that if we are now blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, it is according as we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; that if we are now the adopted children of God, we were predestinated thereto (Eph. 1:8-6); that if we are called to keep ourselves in the love of God, it is God alone who can keep us from falling (Jude 21, 24); that if we have the will to serve Him, it is He who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure (Ph. 2); that if we prove the genuineness of our faith by good works (James 2:17), we are created in Christ unto good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); and that, in fact, from first to last, our salvation and all connected with it, is grounded on the electing love of God, the finished work of Christ in behalf of those who were given Him by the Father (John 17), and the sovereign energy of the Holy Ghost revealing Christ in them by the word, and then enabling those who have thus received Him by faith, to walk in Him (Col. 2:6); "from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:16.) "Of Him, through Him, and to Him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36), "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9.)

We must not in the fretfulness of the flesh quarrel with the truth of God, because of the trials which the confession thereof necessarily brings with it; but we need to be warned, and to tell our own hearts, that there may be a miserable, barren orthodoxy, and a self-righteous hardness of heart in those who most scrupulously regulate their conduct by the precepts of the word; because self, in some deceptive form, occupies the conscience instead of Christ; while man's energy, and not the power of the Holy Ghost, is at work. And since all Christian fellowship is, in the reality of it, the fellowship of life through the Holy Ghost in one and the other of the members of Christ, it follows, that there may be, and often is, more real, happy, soul-elevating fellowship with those who may not be of one mind with ourselves on many important points, but who are really and experimentally occupied with Christ, instead of their religious system; while those whose church position is more religiously true, are often barren and unsavory in their conversation, because their minds are more occupied with their church position, responsibility, obedience, or testimony, than their hearts are with the living Christ Himself.

It is possible also to get so taken up with theories of prophetic interpretation, and mere biblical knowledge, as to make it too manifest that the cross of Christ is not the neighborhood in which we live, and then we may well suspect that all is not right. If the matter of justification is settled; if we are reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, reconciled in the conscience, I mean, and that the peace of God rules in the heart, then let us with girded loins hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:18.) Let us, by God's grace, and by all means, forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before (Phil. 3:13); but it is only in the light of the cross that we can appreciate the glory; it is only as we die daily with Christ that the hope of the glory will have any sanctifying effect on our walk. May we walk in Christ, then there will be a savor of Christ which will make it more manifest

that we know Him, and that our profession is a reality, than all our lofty pretensions, spiritual aspirations, and exact attention to precepts can do. Yet let it not be thought that we would disregard a tender, conscientious respect unto all that is written. Departure from the word has always been the fruitful source of divisions and heresies. If we really do love the Lord, we shall not turn a deaf ear to any of His words, or to the words of His apostles, which, in fact, are also His words.

Brethren, the days are dark, and the heart is deceitful, and our adversary is busy. Let us seek righteousness, seek meekness. Let us consider Jesus Christ, who hath loved us and given Himself for us; and we must love Him. Let us cleave to Him and hearken to His voice, and then we shall love His brethren and our brethren without compromising the truth; for to walk in Christ is to walk in truth as well as in love.

Behold, I Come Quickly!

“I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also.”—
John14:3.

“When He shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.”■1 John 3:2.

JESUS, and shall it ever be,
That I shall see Thee as Thou art:
And be forever, Lord, with Thee,
And from Thee never more depart?
Can I, who merit only Hell,
Expect Thy glorious throne to share;
With God and Christ in Heav’n to dwell,
And sing Thy praise forever there?
Shall this vile body be transform’d
Into a glorious one like Thine;
And though ‘tis now by sin deform’d,
In Thy reflected beauty shine?
Yes, dearest Lord, Thy love I own
Has made me Thine by closest ties;
And Thou wilt safely bring me home
To God on whom my soul relies.
Thy precious blood for such as me,
Thou once didst shed upon the Cross;
And this is now my only plea,
All other hope I count but loss.
Thou, only Refuge of my heart■
Jesus, my Lord, my God, my all!
My Life, my Strength, my Rock Thou art,

And from Thy hands I ne'er can fall.
Jesus, hast Thou not giv'n Thy word,
"Where I am there ye too shall be;"
Oh, how I long to see thee, Lord,
Who lived, and died, and rose for me.
When shall I leave this gloomy world,
With God and Thee to rest above?
When shall I see Thee, dearest Lord,
Whom having never seen I love?
In Thee my heart has found its home;
Apart from thee I cannot stay;
Then come, Lord Jesus, quickly come,
And let me to Thee haste away.
How shall my soul its joy contain,
When I shall hear Thy welcome word,
Bidding me break from every chain,
And rise to meet my approaching Lord.
Till then, Lord, keep me near to Thee,
Till then Thy constant grace impart;
Let Thy bless'd Spirit comfort me,
Until I see Thee as Thou art.

1 Kings 18:17, &c

THE time now came for the servant of the Lord publicly to testify for God. He had proved Jehovah's faithfulness and grace in a secret life of faith at Cherith, and honored the living and true God when no human eye was upon him. In the family circle at Zarephath he again proved the same faithfulness and grace in another course of action, and distinguished himself by his life and walk of faith and love—he walked "as seeing Him who is invisible." In his intercourse with Obadiah, he faithfully made it appear whose he was, and whom he served. All the temptation and discipline which this man of God experienced fitted him for more extensive service, and he was now called to honor God in a very prominent and public capacity.

Without doubt, this gradual leading of the Spirit, from deep secret exercise and service to public testimony, is recorded "for our learning," and is a divine principle that may well be heeded by us; and though it serve to humble us, it will not be without profit, if it cast us more upon God for strength and grace to honor Him in what we call small matters, and circumstances of retirement, and thus qualify us for public testimony. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much," is a principle taught by our Lord Himself; and we also find the apostle Paul insisting upon practical godliness in family and household responsibilities as an indispensable qualification for pastor ship in the Church of God. (1 Tim. 3:5.)

But, to turn again to the ancient Scriptures, we also find in the history of Gideon the same remarkable threefold character of experience and service recorded by the Spirit of God. We see that his acquaintance with God in the accepted sacrifice, and the Divine assurance that followed, "Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die," constrain him to build an altar, and worship the Lord God of Israel. (Judges 6:21-24.) In this we see, as in the history of Elijah, his soul-exercises alone with God. Next, we find Gideon engaged in faithfully serving God in his own family—his father's house—and, according to the commandment of the Lord, he "cuts down the grove," sacrifices his "father's young bullock," overturns and destroys that which was contrary to the truth of the living God, and builds an altar to the God of Israel. (vss. 5:25, 27.) The 31st verse shows us how remarkably the Lord honored his testimony. After these things, having repeatedly and in various ways, through much temptation, proved the faithfulness and grace of God, he goes forth, according to Divine appointment, to honor the God of Israel before an innumerable host of the enemies of the people of the Lord.

And do we not perceive the same principle, in all its perfectness, in the path of the Lord Himself? The first thirty years of the blessed Lord in the days of His flesh were spent in glorifying God, more especially in secret and social duties. "I was cast upon Thee from the womb, Thou art My God from My mother's belly, Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts," &c. were the utterances of the heart of the holy child Jesus. While the inspired account of His going down to Nazareth with His mother and Joseph, and being subject to them, together with His holy and gentle reproof, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" plainly show us how infinitely He glorified God, both in secret and in family associations, before He came forth as God's

public witness to Israel. It is happy thus to trace those features in the path of Him who hath "left us an example that we should follow His steps." We never find the Lord Jesus seeking the esteem of men. Wherever He was, and whatever the circumstances, His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work." "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.... He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." May this mind be in us!

In considering the history of Elijah, we cannot but observe that the blessed Lord seems remarkably shadowed forth by this tried and honored servant. We see him not only as a solitary witness for God, but it may be said that he came unto his own, and his own received him not. He was also counted one "that troubleth Israel:" he testified of it that the works thereof were evil. Moreover, the history of Elijah, prior to his coming forth in public testimony, is left in comparative obscurity; an occasional intimation of his faith and dependence on God, his circumstances and service in the family circle, his passing through an experience of death and resurrection, and his temptation on meeting Obadiah, being the principal points touched on before he comes forth in the deeply solemn testimony, in the face of all Israel, to which he was called. We may notice farther, that his public testimony did not close until he had offered to God an acceptable sacrifice, which was followed by judgment on some, but with blessing to others who beheld the sacrifice, and testified, saying, "The Lord He is God; The Lord He is God." We afterward find the offerer of the sacrifice on the top of the mount interceding for his people, which in due time is followed with an abundant shower of blessing from heaven. The scene closes with the prophet coming forth again, running in triumph before the royal chariot. All this testifies of Jesus to our souls.

The condition of Israel at the time of Elijah's testimony was very awful. "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." (1 Kings 16:33.) Religion still had a place and abounded there were four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal; but it was not the true religion. Some measure of truth might be associated with it, but the wisdom of the creature had displaced the counsel of "the only wise God." The king and people rejected the commandments of the Lord, that they might keep their own tradition. A mixture of truth and error kept them in this God-dishonoring position of halting "between two opinions." The whole lump was well nigh leavened with the idolatry of the age. It has always been Satan's craft to frustrate the truth by mixing what is untrue with it, and thus deceive and blind. In the garden of Eden he admitted the truth, that if our first parents ate of the forbidden tree they would be as gods; but he deceived the woman by appending to it the malicious lie, "Ye shall not surely die." In a later day he stole the comfort and power of the grace of Christ from the Galatian saints, not by presenting in its stead something grossly evil; no, in this way the snare would be apparent; but by subverting its simplicity and truth. By adding "circumcision," an old ordinance of God, to the finished work of Jesus, he seduced them from the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and entangled them again with a yoke of bondage. By thus mixing up truth and error he imbued their minds with "another gospel," that, were even an angel from heaven to preach, he might justly "be accursed." And we know that in Ahab's day there was a certain acknowledgment of the God of Israel while they bowed down to Baal, as there had formerly been a dancing round the golden calf while professedly keeping a feast to Jehovah. This reads us a serious lesson, and may serve to exhort us to hold fast the faithful word of the Lord, and to bid us beware of being corrupted from the simplicity of Christ by philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men.

Elijah's testimony was to the faithfulness of God and the truth of His word, and against their apostacy; so that when the king accosted him with, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" his reply was, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." (vs. 17, 18.)

Such was the bold and true witness of this man of faith; and I would ask, Is not the rejection of the authority of Scripture always a sure mark of departure from God Himself? Most assuredly it is. I do not say but that the Scripture may be read and ostensibly acknowledged, but its authority can only be received into the hearts and consciences of those whose aim is to live for the glory of the Lord. Among such the word of the Lord has always been highly valued. Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat thaw and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." (Jer. 15:16.) Job declared, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:12.) David asks, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" and replies, "by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." (Psa. 119:9.) He also said, "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Psa. 17:4.) And again, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." (Psa. 119:11.) And we know of the Lord Jesus, that "His delight was in the law of the Lord: and in His law did He meditate day and night." (Psa. 1:2.)

As God has been forsaken so has His word been set aside in all ages. Departure from God's word was Jeremiah's frequent testimony against the nation of Israel. He could delight in God's word; but "they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one after the imagination of their evil heart." (ch. 11:8.) The prophet tells us, that "they hearkened not to the words of God, or to His law, but rejected it" (ch. 6:19); that "the word of the Lord was unto them a reproach, they had no delight in it" (ch. 6:10); and that "the prophets prophesied falsely, and the people loved to have it so." (ch. 5:31.) And with this was connected the solemn declaration of the Lord, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (ch. 2:13.)

While we thus see that departure from the authority of the word of God is connected with forsaking God Himself, we also find that returning to the commandments of the Lord is always found to be the path of blessing. When David first attempted to bring up the Ark of the Lord it was connected with signal failure and sorrow; he conferred with flesh and blood—consulted his captains, &c.; but when he acted according to the word of the Lord, wherein it was written that "none ought to carry the Ark of God but the Levites," it was attended with abundant joy and comfort. (1 Chr. 13.-15.; see also Num. 4:2-15; Deut. 10:8, and 31:9.) When the king Jehoshaphat was in great difficulty and distress because of the numerous host that was against him (2 Chr. 20), his refuge was in God; and in prayer he reminded God of His own promise (vs. 9); and published to Judah and Jerusalem the certainty of blessing to those who honored God's word, saying, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." (vs. 20.) We know what victory and blessing followed. When Hezekiah came to the throne, he discovered that the Passover had not been kept for a long time in such sort as it was written; he therefore sent posts throughout all Israel and Judah to command them to turn to the Lord and to keep His word; and in keeping His commandments they found great reward: it was such a time of gladness and joy as had not been known in Jerusalem since the time of Solomon. (2 Chr. 30.) The great revival afterward in the days of Josiah, originated in their finding a book of the law in the house of the Lord, which the king read in the ears of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (2 Chr. 34., 35.) And the time

of blessing after the return of the children of Israel from their captivity, was also particularly associated with Ezra's having "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." (Ezra 7:10.) Lastly, we may refer to the testimony of our blessed Lord Himself, when He said, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition;" and remark also how frequently He referred to the authority of the holy Scriptures, and the importance of practically fulfilling them. We know also what blessing there was in the apostles' days, when "the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."

In these days of man's increasing greatness, when principles of infidelity are rapidly accumulating, it will be needful for us, beloved, often to consider our ways, and to be very jealous for the word of the Lord. If God be pleased to make His holy Scripture refreshing and savory to our spirits, and to conic with power to our consciences, we may well welcome it as His abounding mercy. The word of the prophet Amos on this subject is very solemn: "Behold the days come saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall weeder from sea to sea, and from the north even unto the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." (Amos 8:11, 12.) May we, beloved, well ponder these solemn admonitions, and let them animate us to serve our Saviour-God only, to acknowledge the authority of the word of God only, the teaching of the Spirit of God only, and to glory unceasingly in salvation by grace only.

No. 1. The Sorrows of the Lamb of God

“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Psalm 22:1.

WHAT unutterable agony was that which the Son of God was called to endure, when He cried, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” There never was before, and never will be again, such a cry. The blessed Lord Jesus could always say to Jehovah, “My God;” for though He was equal with God, He took upon Him the form of a servant; and as the perfect Servant, worshipped, served, and loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. Not only did the Son of God abide in the Father’s love, and say, “Father....I know that Thou hearest Me always;” but He also, in the perfection of love and confidence, said, “O God, Thou art My God; early will I seek Thee: My soul thirsteth for Thee, My flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is,” &c. (Psa. 63:1.) “Thou art My God from My mother’s belly.” (Psa. 22:10.)

Obedience led Jesus to death, even the death of the cross; but though in that dreadful hour His soul was “full of troubles,” “His strength dried up like a potsherd,” and His “heart like wax melted in the midst of His bowels,” still it was “My God, my God!” When God had made Him to be sin for us, His unsparing wrath and fierce anger fell upon His own Son. His heart was broken, His hands and feet pierced, all His bones out of joint, His back smitten, His soul poured out unto death, the earth darkened, the multitude mocking and deriding, the hand of Jehovah bruising, still it was “My God, my God!” still He justifies Jehovah, and worships■ “Thou art holy:” whilst in the perfection of lowliness He says, as regards Himself, “I am a worm, and no man.”

No one but God’s equal could so humble Himself. No one but the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts could sheathe in His own heart the glittering sword of Almighty vengeance. No one but He who had infinite capacities could drink up to the very dregs the sup of the wrath of God. No rock but the Rock of Ages could endure such waves and billows. The Holy One of God alone could be “made a curse for us:” He only could be our “Surety.” The Great Shepherd of the sheep could ransom us only by His own blood—the blood of, the everlasting covenant; and, blessed be His name, He endured the cross, despising the shame.

‘The cross, its burden, oh how great:

No strength but His could bear its weight;

No love but His would undertake

To bear it for the sinner’s sake.’

But, how wonderful the mystery that the Creator of all things should bear “our sins in His own body on the tree!” that the Prince of Life” should be “killed;” that the “Just One” should be numbered with transgressors, and yet make “intercession for the transgressors;” that “the Son of the Highest” should be laid “in the lowest pit” (Psa. 88:6); that the “only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father,” should be taken by wicked hands, crucified, and slain; that the Light of the world should be laid “in darkness, in the deeps;” that Jehovah’s righteous Servant, His elect in whom His

soul delighted, who finished the work the Father gave Him to do, should have such an experience of the hiding of God's countenance as should draw from His lips, in his extremity of anguish, the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What depths of grace and holiness, righteousness and peace, are here!

What distress, what terror, what amazing woe did our adorable Emmanuel endure when the fierce wrath of God thus lay upon Him! What creature in heaven or earth could grasp or utter the full meaning of these searchable realities! The long anticipated waters now came into His soul. He sank in deep mire where there was no standing. The full cup of unmingled sorrow was now drunk. If the immediate contemplation of the cross caused Him to "sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground," what must have been His grief and suffering when "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, to make His soul an offering for sin?" Surely, the prophet was led by the Holy Ghost to this wondrous subject when He said, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger. From above hath He sent fire into My bones, and it prevaieth against them: He hath spread a net for My feet, He hath turned Me back: He hath made Me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of My transgressions is bound by His hand: they are wreathed and come up to My neck," &c. (Lam. 1:12-14.)

What a matchless scene of sorrow and love! No comforters are here, none to assuage His bitter sorrow, none to sympathize, none to help: "Lover and friend hast Thou put far from Me." (Psa. 88:18.) Not a drop of mercy is mingled with the cup of wrath, no compassionate hand stretched out to mitigate the agony—"He spared not His own Son." Wondrous grace! Unutterable sorrow! The stern sword of the Lord of Hosts was handled by inflexible justice, and must be bathed in blood. The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood gates [margin] of heaven were opened; deep called unto deep; the terrors of Sinai roared; and all the foaming waves and billows of offended justice rolled over the meek and lowly Jesus. He is forsaken of God; He dies for the ungodly. The Lamb without spot is slain to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness to perfect forever them that are sanctified. (Psa. 88:7, 16; Rom. 5:6; Dan. 9:24.)

The death of Christ was the opening of the all-cleansing fountain for sin and uncleanness. The Just died for the unjust; the Lord of glory was crucified for sinners; the Beloved Son was forsaken, and His offering accepted, that the returning prodigal might be welcomed to the Father's house, and abide eternally there. Thus justice is satisfied, holiness vindicated, Divine wrath appeased, truth fulfilled, the law of God magnified, peace proclaimed, mercy flows out, the guilty are pardoned, and the lost saved; for "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."

Do not our hearts, beloved brethren, adoringly worship, while thus we meditate on the sorrows of the Saviour crucified? Does it not humble us to think that our sins cost the blessed Lord such deep distress and pain? Does it not afresh inspire our hearts with confidence in God, that, when no less a sacrifice could avail, He gave His Beloved Son? And when we see the Beloved Son the willing victim, can we feel otherwise than that such grace is full of consolation, and binds the deepest obligations upon our hearts?

Farther. It was THE FATHER'S will that Jesus should lay down His life. He brought Him into "the dust of death." (John 10:17,18; Psa. 22:15.) THE SON willingly died in our stead; "He gave Himself for our sins." (Gal. 1:4.) "No man," said He, "taketh it (My life) from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18; 12:27; 18:7, 8, 11); and it was "through the ETERNAL SPIRIT" that "He offered Himself without spot to God." But, as we have before noticed, in that dreadful hour it was "My God." The slain One yet trusting in His God; Christ, the sin-bearer, forsaken, yet crying "My God," "why castest Thou off My soul? why hidest Thou Thy face from Me?" (Psa. 88:14;) yea, pouring out His heart with all its sorrow and grief unto Him that smote Him. What lessons for us are here, beloved! Never were such prayers, such cries and tears, as the crucified Son of God put forth unto Him that was able to save Him from death. He trusted in God at all times, and poured out His heart before Him. If the cruel multitude gape upon Him with their mouths, laugh, shoot out the lip, compass Him about, or taunt Him, saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him;" does He not follow His God, who forsakes Him, with this sad tale of the wickedness of His foes, as well as put up "strong crying" to be saved from the waters of death? (Psa. 22:7, 8, 13, 16.) And He was heard in that He feared, even though it were from the horns of the unicorns. The loving heart, broken with reproach, cried and was heard. His soul was not left in hell, neither did His flesh see corruption. It was not possible that He should be holden of death. The vials of wrath due for the sins of His people had been emptied on Him. The wages of sin was paid to the full when Jesus died and made His grave with the wicked; and the debt being canceled, justice detains the prisoner no longer, death hath no more dominion over Him, for in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. God hath accepted the death of Christ on our behalf, so that we are called to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And as we saw all the persons of the Triune Jehovah concerned in the death of Christ, so do we find the same blessed instruction in reference to His resurrection from the dead. He was raised up from the dead by the glory of THE FATHER. (Rom. 6:4.) THE SON said, "Destroy this temple (His body), and in three days I will raise it up." "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 2:19, 21; 10:18.) We are further told that He was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the SPIRIT." (1 Peter 3:18.)

In the prophetic account of our Lord's sufferings and death, it is blessed to see that the first thing that follows "Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns," is the intimation of His desire for our participation in His resurrection joy. "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." (Psa. 22:22.) We find also that when Christ rose from the dead, and revealed Himself to Mary, He said, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God." (John 20:17.)

Into this blessed fellowship, beloved, are we brought; in this marvelous grace we stand; Christ's Father our Father; His God our God; through the sorrows and victory of the Lamb slain. But His sorrows are over. The path of humiliation has been perfectly trodden, with infinite satisfaction to God, and for our eternal welfare. Heaven welcomes and enthrones the earth-rejected Son, and declares Him worthy of all praise, honor, power, and glory.

No place too high for Him is found,

No place too high in heaven!

All power in heaven and in earth is given unto Him. Angels and principalities are subject to Him. He still loves us as the Father hath loved Him, and hath sent down the Holy Ghost to comfort us during His absence, to teach, guide, bring Him to our remembrance, to testify of the crucified, risen, and glorified Son to our souls, until He comes again to receive us unto Himself. O for the anointed eye, and circumcised heart, to be able, with unshod feet, to search more deeply into the profound mysteries of the cross of Christ!

Joy and Conflict

GRANT, Lord, it may not be in vain
That I have made my boast in Thee;
And talked of Thy redeeming, grace,
Of all Thy wondrous love to me.
Most weak and helpless, yet I am
On Thee dependent every hour;
No stock of strength from whence to draw,
In me no wisdom and no pow'r.
But Thou dost fill my heart with joy,
"Good tidings", from afar dost send,
By which my restless will to Thine,
In sweet obedience, Thou dost bend.
Thy word of Truth, that Book Divine,
Tells me of all Thy mind and will;
Fills me with knowledge day by day,
Thy holy pleasure to fulfill.
It speaks of Jesus and of Grace,
It tells of things laid up above,
Of heavenly pleasures and of joys,
Prepared by Almighty love.
Well may my soul then happy be,
Feasting upon substantial good,
Resting beneath the sheltering wings
Of Him who is both great and good.
Well may my lips His praise proclaim,
And speak of what my God hath done;

And how He gave His choicest gift,
His only and Beloved Son!
But still the conflict let me press,
The daily enemy pursue;
The glorious fight of faith engage,
And keep the victor's prize in view.
So shall I go from strength to strength,
So shall I not the Spirit grieve,
So shall I honor Christ my Lord,
And glory to the Father give.

Gen. 42

IN the Scriptures of truth expressions are not used without their having due signification and importance; a name even is not varied by mere accident, or to please the ear; but the Spirit of God has a definite object in His use of the words, epithets, and names, which He employs throughout the Bible. Bearing this in mind, we may profitably inquire why the old name Jacob, and the new name Israel, are so frequently interchanged in the history before us. Thus the forty-second chapter opens with, "Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?" The conduct of the Patriarch in this time of need was such that the Spirit of God employs his old name in the flesh. Israel had sunk back into Jacob; for he judged by what he saw and heard, instead of directing his eyes to the unseen and Almighty God (see chs. 35:10, 11); instead of calling to mind the vision of glory which had cheered him in his early pilgrimage at Bethel, he directed the thoughts of his sons towards Egypt, as if he would have them turn their eyes thither, instead of lifting them up to the living God. The circumstances of the case, it may be, seemed too plain to necessitate ally counseling with God; famine was at the doors, there was corn in Egypt, and he had money in his possession; what therefore could be more clear and simple than to send his sons to buy the necessary food? And thus the man of faith, whose name was Israel, sunk down into the man after the flesh, and lost for a time his princely standing. Beloved, is it not too often so with ourselves? Do we not, alas! frequently neglect to take counsel with Him whose name is "Counselor;" and thus, though kings and priests, become suppliants for the world's favors, when we ought to be maintaining our place as princes with God and with men, and prevailing? Do not some circumstances appear too plain, too manifest upon the very face of them, to admit of a doubt as to how we should act; so we undertake them in our own strength, relying upon our wisdom; and the habit is engendered of leaning on our own resources, God being consulted only on great occasions? May not this failing of the Patriarch, this want of faith so manifest, also, in ourselves, be traced again to a neglect of another kind? Where do we find any record of a sacrifice between the thirty-fifth and forty-sixth chapters of his history? We read of no altar being erected by Jacob after he leaves Bethel (ch. 35:7), until he comes to Beersheba (ch. 46:1), on his way to Egypt, where he sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac, probably on the altar that Isaac himself had erected there. All seems to have been a dreary void for many years, as regards any open remembrance of the slain lamb; and the "kid of the goats," instead of being offered to the Lord, is killed on one occasion by Israel's sons, in order that they may dip Joseph's coat in the blood; and on another used by Judah as the wages of iniquity. Does not this speak loudly to us concerning the fruitful source of unbelief and sin in the family of the faithful? If the slain lamb be neglected, if the soul do not feed much on the body and blood of, Christ, if the death of the Son of man be not often openly referred to in our houses, expediency will take the place of faith; our own resources will be trusted instead of the living God; and weakness and failure, or, it may be, some manifest fall, will be the sad result.

Verse 4. Jacob, having in his own wisdom discovered a way of keeping alive his household, sends his sons to buy corn; but he retains Benjamin, "for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him."

Having taken the management of it all into his own hands, he is afraid of what may happen if he sends his youngest child; he feels there is a “peradventure,” a perhaps, a chance, in the matter. Had the Lord been consulted, and His guidance followed, there would have been no peradventure; no mischief can happen if God be the guide; imaginary alarms will never occupy the soul if it be leaning on the Lord, and take no step without His direction. “Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.” (Prov. 1:33.)

Verse 5. “And the sons of Israel came to buy corn amongst those that came.” Here the name Israel occurs; and this draws our attention to the contrast between the glorious name, “sons of Israel,” and the abject way in which these men presented themselves, as suppliants for corn, on a par with others who came on the same errand into Egypt. They bow down as beggars with their faces to the earth, instead of being like sons of a prince, having power with God and with men, and prevailing. The money which they bring with them gives them no confidence, no superiority over others; but they act as soliciting a favor from the lord of the country, instead of conducting themselves as children of a king. The truth is, that if we would be princes and have power with men, we must first have power and prevail with God.

Verse 8. The heart of Joseph had been true to his brethren; neither the pit, the prison, nor the throne, had blotted them out from his affection; love, stronger than death, stronger than prosperity, had increased rather than diminished in his bosom; and there is nothing like love to retain in the memory the features of those dear to us. “Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.” They had arrived in the very land into which they had sold him, yet no recollection of the past returned to their minds. Their consciences had been thoroughly blunted; their sin was not remembered, for God had not been in their thoughts; and no lamb on the altar had witnessed to their own souls or to God that they were sinners. It was therefore one great object with Joseph in his subsequent dealings with them, to bring them into the conscious presence of a living God, in order that they might be truly humbled under a sense of their sin.

Verse 9. And now the dreams rushed back in all their vividness upon the memory of Joseph. Those visions of glory had been designed for his sustainment and comfort in the midst of the deep trials and sorrows through which he had to pass; but he seems not to have called them to mind until he had already entered upon the scene of the glory itself. Let it not be so with us, brethren; may we walk this vale of tears, this valley of the shadow of death, with the bright hope of glory already realized as substance to our souls; let it not be that we discover, for the first time, the truth of God’s word of promise, when we cannot help doing so; that is, when we have entered upon the actual enjoyment of what He has promised; but now in this season of our pilgrimage and temptation, may we have the hope richly shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and be enabled to count affliction light, and but for a moment, because we realize by faith the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Verses 9-14. Thrice does Joseph repeat the accusation, “Ye are spies,” “to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.” They had in former years counted him to be a spy upon their evil ways, and he now makes them feel the bitterness of being themselves suspected. How wonderfully also they were obliged to discover their falsehood in the very assertion that they were “true men;” for in proof that they were no spies, they gave an account of their number, “twelve brethren—and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.” Had they been true to their father? had they

been true to Joseph? Must not the very utterance of the words “one is not” have sounded afresh in the ears of Joseph the tale of their false dealings, and did it not revive in their own consciences, after years of forgetfulness, the memory of their sin?

Joseph proceeds to threaten them “By the life of Pharaoh,” and puts them all together into ward three days. For a time not a ray of hope is allowed to dawn upon them. The very name of God, which might have been some alleviation to them, as they must often have heard it in their father’s home, is withheld, and they are made to feel the misery of being shut up without a God to trust in, without a friend to help them in this the day of their calamity, “without hope, and without God in the world.” On the third day, however, light breaks in upon them. “And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do and live—I fear God!” What sounds were these coming from the supposed Egyptian Prince With what wonder, and yet how mixed with contrition they must have heard the words, “I fear God.” The name and presence of God thus unexpectedly brought into the scene, makes the past come vividly to their recollection. It may be that the words, “I fear God,” were the last they had heard from the lips of Joseph when they sold him into Egypt; at all events they were at length awakened in some measure to a sense of their iniquity. “And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.” Reuben also adds to the sting of their conscience by his allusion to the past; and lastly Simeon is bound before their eyes, so that they might even see the scene again enacted when they had sold Joseph as a bond slave to the Ishmaelites. Subsequently also, when one of them discovered the money returned in the sack’s mouth, “their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?” Everything has a voice reminding them of their, till now, long-forgotten iniquity. Truly “the wicked fleeth when no man pursueth,” and these men are scared at every turn.

We are, brethren, walking through a world where everything, to an awakened conscience, speaks to us of the death and absence of the beloved One. Everything should therefore remind us of our own sin, and yet not to cast down our souls in fear, but rather that we may rejoice in the sense of the abundant grace and mercy of Him who His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. If the iniquity of our heels compass us about, wherefore should we fear? Many a foot-print of the past might well affright us, were it not that we can discern the cross of Christ still farther back than our sins, and that God hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

‘Before, behind, around,
They set their fierce array
To fight and force me from my ground,
Along Emmanuel’s way.
I meet them face to face,
Through Jesu’s conquest blest,
March in the triumph of his grace,
Right onward to my rest.’

But let us also observe God's dealings with Jacob. He as well as his sons was afraid when he beheld the money returned; for he had trusted in this wealth to purchase the corn, and had not sought the Lord; he is now made to see that God can supply him with corn without money; and the very arm on which he had leant becomes a tenor to him. His policy also in detaining Benjamin, "lest peradventure mischief befall him," turns out exactly contrary to what he had expected; for Simeon is detained as a prisoner in Egypt, and he is compelled to send Benjamin also if he would keep his house from starving. What a lesson this teaches us of the folly of man's expedients. Jacob had made flesh his arm, he trusted in his own sagacity, and now he cannot see when good is coming; but in the language of despair exclaims, "All these things are against me."

Observe the contrast of these words of Jacob, with the words of the apostle in Romans 8:28, 31: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Jacob could not see afar off, he lacked the eye-salve, and consequently his vision was circumscribed within the limit of the events apparently happening around him. At the very moment that he said, "all these things are against me," everything was in his favor. Joseph was a prince in Egypt, the whole of the treasures of that kingdom were at his disposal, and what was better than all, God was dealing with the hearts and consciences of his children, so that they had never before been in such a softened state; but unbelief cannot see these things, for unbelief cannot see God. The only eye-salve which will enable us to see things as they really are, is the precious blood of Christ; that will answer every purpose, wealth, sight, clothing, joy, peace, all will be ours if we keep "the Lamb as it had been slain," constantly in view; the whole of the sanctuary and its furniture, and its priest, declare in every varied way, that one blessed tale of the death and resurrection of the Lord; and the soul that hides itself in that pavilion, will know the reality of those words, "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."

Genesis 22

In the affecting narrative of Abraham offering up his son, we find not only instruction of a typical and experimental character, but also a sample of household godliness, or the manifestation of the mind of the Lord in reference to family relationships.

Every member of a christian family should be a shadow of Christ, each availing himself of the position in which he is called to glorify Him who hath purchased him with His own blood. Christ is the perfect pattern. There was no self-will in Him.

Family godliness had been a matter of solemn import with Abraham long before he was called to this deep exercise of faith with his beloved Isaac. "I know him," saith the Lord, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." (Gen. 18:19.) Such was the practice of the father of the faithful "the friend of God." In the midst of an evil generation he built altars to Jehovah. He knew much about calling upon the name of the Lord; and though feeling "but dust and ashes," he repeatedly interceded for others as well as worshipped. He walked with God. The interrogation of his son, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" shows that the lad was no stranger to the offering up of sacrifices to God; and that he knew something, at least, of the need of the lamb being laid upon the altar. The patriarch's answer referring to the power and grace of God to "provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering," plainly shows us the careful way in which he sought to direct the mind of his beloved Isaac to the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.

But with all that which was so estimable, and so worthy of our imitation in the family godliness of the patriarch, he was not perfect. God had graciously given him a help-meet. There was a believing mother in the house, as well as a believing father; and sweet indeed it is to see how indispensable she was to carrying out family order and discipline according to the mind of Christ. In the case of Ishmael she saw what it appears Abraham was not aware of; her spiritual discernment at this time was clearer than his. Her soul was evidently in communion with the God of promise, and jealous for His honor. She beheld Ishmael mocking; a despiser was there which must be "cast out." "The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son;" but feelings of affection must not hinder godly rule. God, therefore, now comes in, confirms the wife's judgment, and arouses Abraham to a sense of his responsibility. In all this Sarah does not assume the place of rule, but as becomes a holy woman and help-meet, calls upon her husband to exercise the place of authority, which he executed when he knew it was according to the mind of God. (Gen. 21:9-14.) All this is full of instruction and encouragement to both fathers and mothers who desire to glorify God in their various family duties and circumstances, and shows us the deep importance of each member maintaining faithfully, unto the Lord, the position which He, in His infinite wisdom, has assigned.

The practical godliness of the parents, in course of years, so tells upon Isaac, that his history, even when a lad, is used by the Holy Ghost as one of the most remarkable types of the Son of God

recorded in Scripture. Age ripens, but does not alter the solemn obligations of father and son; yet both relationships are maintained with the truest affection, filial confidence, and respect. "My father," "my son," show us that mutual respect and love were unaltered by filial tenderness and familiarity. An important point, doubtless. The great object of the adversary is to hinder members of christian families from showing forth Christ in the various relationships of life. His artifices, therefore, are to induce children to disobey their parents, parents to be ruled by their children, servants to rule their masters, &c according to the self-willed spirit now so increasingly manifesting itself.

In the chapter before us, the subjection of Abraham to God is first most prominently set forth. The ruler of the family is himself a pattern of most ready obedience to his heavenly Master. This, doubtless, is the secret of all rule and order according to the mind of Christ. Let none think to rule others well, who are not walking themselves in subjection to God's word. God calls Abraham, and his response is, "Behold here I am." God then commands him to do the most painful and trying service, and Abraham gets up early in the morning to do it. It is God's call, and he obeys. He is not told to ask his son if he would like to go, but to "take Isaac" and offer him, &c., and he "took" him. Abraham is in full and ready subjection to God, and son and servants are in subjection to him. It was a sudden call, and a long journey; but no fretting, no rebellion is manifested. Abraham, Isaac, servants, all shadows of Christ in this family scene. All is solemn and peaceful, for subjection to God, and not self-will, is at the root. What solemn and humbling admonitions this scene presents to us!

God commanded Abraham only to take his son to the mountain, the servants therefore, in obedience to their master's command, tarry till they return-they "abide with the ass," &c.; and though the father and son are alone, still it is the father ruling in the fear of the Lord, and the son honoring and obeying "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son...and they went both of them together." (vs. 6.) The place was "afar off," and a considerable quantity of wood needed for the burnt offering, but it was his place as a son to obey. Blessed shadow of Christ, as well as a happy service to the aged patriarch.

But further. The aged man of faith needs no human assistance in binding this strong lad. It is still subjection to God in Abraham, and subjection of the son to his father. "Abraham built an altar, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him upon the altar." Can anything be more beautiful? or could we wish for a more perfect picture of rule and subjection among men subject to like passions as ourselves? Such, surely, is the divine order; and happy indeed are those, who so learn the daily power of the cross of Christ, as to mortify the old man, subdue self-will, and live unto God!

Beloved brethren, how are our households ordered? Is Jesus crucified and glorified prominently set forth and worshipped in our families? Are we ourselves found walking in subjection to His word?

Husbands, do you esteem the honor of being a type of the heavenly Bridegroom? Are your souls desiring to be found obeying and imitating Him, by loving your wives with most fervent and unselfish affection, nourishing and cherishing them even as the Lord the Church, and giving honor to them as unto the weaker vessels? (Eph. 5:25-29; Col. 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7.)

Wives, do you count it your privilege as well as duty to love your husbands, reverence them, and be in subjection to them in everything, with chaste conversation coupled with fear; owning them in the place of rule, as given them of God, as becometh true helpmeets and fellow-heirs of the grace of life? (Eph. 5:24, 33; Col. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-6.)

Fathers, are you really walking before God in your families, commanding your children and households, ruling and training your children according to the will of God—bringing them up, unlike the Gentiles, “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?” Are you laying aside carnal policy and worldly expediency, contending in your house for the authority of God and His word in all matters? (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; Prov. 29:15, 17.)

Mothers, are you watching against the influence of all mockers of God on your children, counseling with their father, a pattern of subjection to your husband before them, laboring earnestly together for the glory of God, and the present and eternal blessing of your sons and daughters, in training them for God? (Gen. 21:9, 10; 1 Sam. 1:27, 28.)

Children, is it your joy to resemble the holy child Jesus, by obeying and honoring your parents according to the word of God? There is a promise of blessing upon such. (Eph. 6:1-8; see also Deut. 21:18-21; Prov. 30:17.)

Masters, do you take Christ for your pattern, and rule your servants as He who is just and compassionate rules you? Do you accept their service as He accepts yours? (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1.)

Servants, do you set Him before you who was Jehovah’s righteous servant, and humbly and faithfully serve your earthly masters, not as men-pleasers, but as unto the Lord, expecting His blessing and reward? (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22-25; Gen. 16:9.)

There is an antichristian principle rapidly developing itself, in which men, with increasing self-love and self-will, aim after liberty and unrestrainedness to the flesh, “despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities.” Let us be watchful, meditating much upon the sufferings and glory of the Son of God, that we may be found walking in obedience to God’s word, and exalting Christ.

If the Lord tries our faith, it is that we may prove His riches and grace.

If we do not live above our circumstances, we shall act beneath our dignity.

Service to Christ

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”— James 1:27.

“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”■Phil. 2:20, 21.

It is a sorrowful and humbling exercise for the conscience, to contrast the untiring activity and the large expenditure of money which we can often so readily render to the things of time and sense, with the scanty measure of our bestowments on the things of eternity. The real cause of all this is the absence of vitality of soul, of a true and full enjoyment of heavenly things. We make many excuses, but the Lord has one answering and rebuking word for them all: “Thou hast left thy first love.” (Rev. 2:4.)

So long as the saints are content with the thought of their souls being secure, touching the matter of salvation, and retire as it were from that affecting word, “Do as I have done to you,” they of course can make no progress in the divine life, nor, as a consequence, in the service of Christ. A vast quantity of divine precept is lost sight of, and the resulting blessing not realized. It would be wholesome when we are not bringing forth fruit, to fear being taken away (John 15); when we are lukewarm, to fear being spewed out of the Lord’s mouth (Rev. 3:16); when we are not visiting and clothing the Lord’s suffering ones, to fear being cast into everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:31-46); when we are not serving in the Master’s house, to fear having a portion with hypocrites (Matt. 24:42, 61); when we are hiding our talent, to fear being cast out as an unprofitable servant. (Matt. 25:14-30.) If we have this world’s goods, and shut up the bowels of our compassion, we should each one ask ourselves, “How dwelleth the love of God in me?” (1 John 3:17.) When we allow anger or enmity to dwell within us against our brother, we should Consider whether we are in darkness. (1 John 2:9.) “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” I make no system of doctrine to evade the full force of these solemn and searching warnings. Alas! how often do we dangerously rest upon doctrines as to our safety, without seeking after, and seeing that we have the things that “accompany salvation.” That field which bringeth forth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whilst that only which bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. (Heb. 6) Israel lost the vineyard. Why? Because they brought not forth its fruit to God (see Isa. 5. Matt. 21:33, 46); rather than do so they killed the Son of God. It is a solemn and searching word, that the controversy between God and Israel was regarding fruit. Jesus came to receive the fruits of the vineyard, and rather than give them they killed Him. They failed not in their profession■in this they abounded■but there was no fruit for the taste and table of the householder.

The thought in these days, it seems to me, in the minds of many of the Lord’s children, is being served and cared for, rather than serving others. Large and jealous demands are made for personal attention and sympathy, whilst on their part they overlook doing the same to others. The consequence is, that a sickly and dissatisfied state of soul is engendered. Surely service to Christ

comes within the reach of all. There are few who, with a little self-denial, might not have pence to give away, if not pounds. Few who might not so redeem their time as to have it in their power to make visits of sympathy, or to say a word to a poor perishing soul. At any rate, all can spend some time, had they the heart for it, before a throne of grace, and thus draw down by the prayer of faith showers of blessing.

The notion of a minister caring for me destroys the far more blessed idea of myself caring for others. The order of God is, "That the members should have the same care one for another." (1 Cor. 12:25.) That the body of Christ should edify itself by the effectual working in the measure of every part. (Eph. 4) The Lord has constructed and tempered the body spiritually, as well as naturally, to this end. I am solemnly convinced that no church can prosper where this is not the case. What are saints left on earth for? Is it not to bring forth fruit to God, to be helpers of the gospel, and caretakers of His people? The language of Cain was, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The saint should be a light before men, in the house, and in the world. (Matt. 5) He is not his own, he is bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God; therefore he should glorify God in his body and spirit, which are His. He is called from darkness to light to show forth His praises. The Lord hath said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God." Do we care for our families, our business, and ourselves? Do not even the publicans the same? "After all these things the Gentiles seek." Did not Jesus say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?" (Matt. 6) The sin of the age when Christ comes is not the neglect of temporal matters, but absorption in them; so that by reason of these things they will be unprepared to meet Him. (Matt. 24:36-41.) The failure of the virgins is, they all slumber and sleep; they have, when He comes, ceased to watch and be ready. Their loins are not girded, nor their lights burning. Zeal for God is now for the most part lost sight of. Questions and persons are discussed, whilst the power of practical self-denying life is quenched. Activity in every branch may be seen, save in the service of Christ. The Laodicean's state is ours.

Brethren, the time is short. The night cometh when no man can work. Soon we shall have to render an account to God of all the deeds done in the body; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. A conflict exists now between Christ and Satan. We are on the one side or the other. Mere profession settles not the question. The Lord has said, "He that gatheredeth not with Me scattereth." If we are not for Him, we are against Him. Service to Christ conduces to our happiness, and to the glory of God. As we sow so shall we reap. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Cor. 9:6.) "Blessed is he that soweth beside all waters." "This man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25.) If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

It is painful to see a professor of religion spending his days with no higher thoughts, as far as can be traced in his actings, than considering his own matters. Looking only on his own things. No widow's heart is by him made to rejoice. No orphan finds in him a father's care. No saint's feet by him are washed. Heaven is never made to rejoice over one sinner that he has been the means of leading to repentance. He spends his days like the beast that perisheth, the earth beneath his feet being what he lives upon. Can such a one be a christian? It was the Lord Himself who said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." In these days where are we to find the true-hearted self-denying christian, he who is bearing the burden and heat of the day for his Master's glory? Sonship is one

thing, to be a faithful servant and soldier of the cross is another. Christ was a servant; He is one now. He has declared plainly that He loves His Master, His wife, and children. From their service He has pledged Himself never to go free. (Ex. 21:5; Psa. 40:6; Isa. 1:5.) His freedom, His delight, His meat and drink, are in the service of them He loves. To Him therefore God appoints the highest place, and crowns Him with many crowns. "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." (Isa. 53) At the well of Samaria, the need of the poor harlot was more to Him than His own food, and this is the true spirit of service, the only service that has Christ for its impress.

There is a great reward in faithful service. (See 1 Cor. 15:58; Hebrews 6:10.) Brethren, let us remember these things; seek to be able to say that we are free from the blood of all men, our life and walk testifying of Jesus. Let us seek by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, by our good works to glorify our heavenly Father. Let us not be like those who, in the days of the Lord's conflict with His enemies, abode among the sheepfolds. Gilead abode beyond Jordan. Dan remained in ships. Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his creeks (margin). Whilst Zebulon and Napthali were a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. (Judg. 5:16, 18.) They lived not for themselves, but for God, while their brethren shut themselves up in the heart and center of their worldliness. The Lord felt this slight, this walking according to the course of this world, and not according to the current of His Spirit. In the days of David's prosperity, whilst Israel was in conflict, at the very time that kings go forth to battle, he sends forth his servants, but remains himself at home. He tarries still at Jerusalem. Instead of being a witness and a helper in the struggle, sharing Israel's fare, he sees the beautiful Bathsheba, and she, and not the enemies of Israel, secured his fall. It is ever so. To retire from the service of Christ, and the afflictions of the gospel, into the course and current of our own things, is to peril our safety. Our place is conflict and service. To be off the battle field, is to be a deserter from our post, and to place ourselves at the disposal of Satan. Of those who confess themselves to be pilgrims and strangers, it is said "God is not ashamed to be called their God." "Let no man take thy crown," is a word for every servant. Brethren, suffer not failure in others, or unrequited services, to throw you back. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:20, 21.) When Isaiah saw the grace and glory of Jesus, his answer to "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" was, "Here am I, send me." (Isa. 6) When Elias was spending his time in speaking against Israel, and exalting himself, (for these two failings generally accompany each other,) the Lord asked him "What doest thou here, Elijah?" When again asked the same question, he repeats the same things. The Lord then puts Elisha in his room. (1 Kings 19.)

Brethren, may the Lord awake our hearts to righteousness, that we sin not! May He plant in us larger desires than the world can satisfy! May He so fill us with Himself, and cause our hearts so to overflow with His fullness, that out of our bellies may flow rivers of living water! Then, "our enemies, being judges," shall have to say of us, that we have been with Jesus. Many shall then have to rejoice on account of us in the day of glory. Above all, how truly blessed to hear Jesus say to us at the last day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Amen. Amen.

Paul's preaching at Corinth "was in demonstration of the Spirit and in power," but he tells us that he "determined not to know anything among them, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Jude ver. 11

THE apostle Peter speaks of “the way of Balsam” as characterizing those who would privily bring in damnable heresies. (2 Pet. 2.) And He who walks amidst the seven candlesticks denounces those who “held” and those who “taught” the doctrine of Balsam. (Rev. 2:14, 20.) There is necessarily a close connection between “the error,” “the way,” and “the doctrine of Balsam.” But “the way,” and “the doctrine” of Balsam seem to have sprung from his “error.” “Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balsam.” (2 Peter 2:15.) Mistakes, ignorance, and blunders, every christian will find more or less in the retrospect of his own course; but he has an High Priest “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” But there is an error which God leaves to work out its own consequences, whether resulting in open apostasy, or severity of discipline; and that error is, after God’s will has been plainly declared, to cherish the desire to depart from it, and to construe God’s permission to have our own way into an approval of our own way. Such was the error of Balsam. Such the error even of saints, when God “grants them their own desire,” even as He did to Israel in the wilderness. (Ps. 78:29-31.) Such the error so prevalent throughout Christendom, which regards itself so complacently as the legitimate fruit of the mission of Christ—an error issuing “in strong delusion” and awful judgment. (2 Thess. 2:11, 12.)

Nothing could be more decided than the commandment of God to Balsam, when the messengers of Balak first came to ask him to come and curse Israel. “Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.” (Numb. 22:12.) Balsam began by tampering with the divine commandment. He does not tell the messengers of Balsam the whole truth. “Get you, says he, into your own land; for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.” (vs. 13.) Balsam thus showed that his heart was to go with them; that the commandment of the Lord laid him under an uneasy restraint; which the temptation of higher honor and greater rewards might cause him to burst. His heart was not right with God. “He loved the wages of unrighteousness.” On the arrival of Balak’s messengers the second time, the leaning of Balsam’s heart was made manifest. He both felt and owned that he was under the restraining power of God’s hand; but instead of acting on the decisive commandment which he had received from the Lord, he bids the messengers to wait, “that (says he) I may know what the Lord will say unto me more.” The commandment of the Lord was plain and positive. First, “Thou shalt not go with them.” Secondly, “Thou shalt not curse them, for they are blessed.” Nothing more was needed; but Balsam by seeking more, was seeking to have the restraint of the Lord removed from Him, in order that he might have his own way. Viewed in this light the error of Balsam is not uncommon. There is often a tendency in our hearts to get from under the force of some plainly revealed commandment of the Lord, in order to have our own will. Happy for us when it pleases God by one pressure and another to bring us into acquiescence with His “good, acceptable, and perfect will.” But heavy and sorrowful is that discipline, when God allows us to have our own way, only to prove its folly in its necessary consequences, which are ever known unto God.

On his second waiting upon God, Balaam is allowed to have his way; but had he not been blinded by covetousness, by the very condition attached to it he might have seen that it would not end in honoring him, but in establishing the blessing of the people of Israel. "And God came unto Balsam by night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." The Lord gave Balsam the desire of his heart, but it was in judgment. Be He did to Israel; "He gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul." The Lord often rebukes the waywardness of His people by referring to the instinct of animals. "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the Lord." (Jer. 8:7.) But Balaam "was rebuked for his iniquity by the dumb ass speaking with man's voice." Balaam hastened on his ass to go greedily after his covetousness; and the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; but Balsam saw not the angel ready to destroy him. Once and again he smote the ass for not going on; and then the ass fell down under Balsam, and expostulated with him, speaking with man's voice. Even this miracle does not arrest him. He was so mad upon his idol, that he could not see destruction before him; but when his eyes were opened by the Lord, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and the sword drawn in his hand, then he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. What instruction have we here! the error of construing God's permission of our ways into approval of them, is "madness." Destruction is before us in our own ways; and if we are permitted to go on in them it will assuredly overtake us. God used the tongue of Balsam's ass to rebuke Balsam; and then He used Balsam's tongue to utter some of the most glorious prophecies recorded in Scripture. Balsam could not get license to curse, however he might be permitted to run after his covetousness. God can use what instruments He pleases, either to announce or to accomplish His purposes; but the highest gifts, if there be not grace in the heart, profit not the possessor: they are used by God as the tongue of Balsam's ass was used. Balsam was "a prophet;" he "heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open;" and he saw blessing and glory for others, but not for himself. Caiaphas subsequently prophesied that it was "expedient that one man should die for the people." (John 11:49-52.) God used the tongue of Caiaphas as He had used the tongue of Balsam's ass. In a day when talent is admired and has its price, it is profitable to meditate on the error of Balsam. Much truth may forcibly be presented to others, by those who have never tasted it themselves. The eyes may be opened, the understanding enlightened, and men may even prophecy in the name of Jesus (Matt. 7:22), and yet they may be "running greedily after the error of Balsam for reward."

The error of Balaam in thinking that what God permits He therefore approves, will help to account for the actual state of Christendom. Men complacently glory in the result of their willing departure from the truth of God. But notwithstanding the thoughts of men, God's purpose with respect to His Church remains undisturbed, even as all Balsam's waywardness, instead of hindering, confirmed the blessing of Israel. "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balsam the son of Bear answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." (Math 6:5.) "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." (Prov. 21:30.)

But evil doctrine can do that which enchantment and persecution cannot effect, even bring dishonor on Israel, and sore judgment from the hand of the Lord. A deceived heart had turned

Balsam aside, and after all the illustrious prophecies his mouth had uttered, Balaam taught Balak a lesson by means of which Israel might be brought under the judgment of God; although Balak could not prevail against them. The friendship of the Moabites prevailed, where Balsam's mouth and Balak's power could do nothing. It was through "the counsel of Balaam that Israel committed trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." (Num. 31:16.) "Balsam taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." (Rev. 2:14; Num. 25:1-3.) How intimately connected is the error with the doctrine of Balaam. And the same error has led from the days of the apostles unto our own days to the same doctrine, namely, that the friendship of the world is helpful to the children of God, instead of being enmity against God. Learning and eloquence are much oftener used to overlay sound doctrine than to help it; and to prove the possibility, and not the impossibility, of the service of God and mammon. Men have so widely departed from the doctrines of grace, which only are according to godliness, that to contend for these doctrines gives offense as being narrow-minded and uncharitable. All the external persecution to which the church has been subjected has not prevailed to make so much havoc of it, as the withering blight of false doctrine which has sprung up from within.

In what does "the error," "the way," "the doctrine," "the counsel of Balaam," issue? He is found amidst the enemies of the Lord, in open rebellion against Him, and perishes with his associates. In the great battle of the Lord, recorded Num. 31, Israel "slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain: Balsam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword." In that great day of the Lord which is approaching, where will all those who have run after the error of Balaam be found, when there must be decision either for Christ or against Him? Where will be found in that day talents, eloquence, and extensive human influence, which have dazzled men, obscured the glory of Christ, and substituted human inventions for the truth of God? "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." "Woe unto them, they have ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward."

Gone Before

“Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” ■ 1 Thes. 4:14.

AH! why bewaileth friendship still,
Those who have left us pilgrims here;
There dawns on them a brighter morn,
And now beyond the reach of care,
Freed before us from conflict sore,
They are not lost, but gone before.
How great the weight which on them press'd,
And made them oft their weakness know;
Many the days and hours past,
Of doubtful trial here below:
They rest in Christ, their grief's no more:
They are not lost, but gone before.
How blessed when they wake from sleep
To find that faith had told them true,
And hymns of love on earth begun,
On golden harps to sound anew;
Then shall we meet to part no more;
They are not lost, but gone before.
Secure in Christ from every harm,
No sin nor death can reach them there;
Nor can the snares which compass men
Disturb them with the slightest fear;
Already safe on Canaan's shore,
They are not lost, but gone before.
May the same faith which led them on,

And strengthen'd them from day to day;
Direct our upward path to God,
Open to us each darksome way,
And to our hearts those friends restore,
Who are not lost, but gone before.

Ex. 12

THOUGH God appeared to have ensured (from the first two verses in the chapter) a continual remembrance of the Passover, yet we find Israel frequently told that it must be a continual thing, as chap. 13:5, 10. Though everything was to take its count from that Feast, and it was to be “the beginning of months unto them,” yet they are often reminded to keep it.

The truth that presses on my mind in connection with this, is the distinct character of remembrance God has affixed to the Feast. (1 Cor. 5) “Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the Feast,” &c. “This do in remembrance of Me.”

There is no injunction, after the first celebration of the Passover, to have the sprinkling of the blood again, for God to look at and be appeased by. It was never repeated. It was done once on the door posts and lintels in Egypt, and done forever: and the power of that is clear to all our hearts.

You have another place fixed in chapter 13:9 “the hands, eyes, mouth.” It was once affixed to the place of abode, and it was a place of safety forever; but after that first blood-shedding, it was never again put on the doors. It is easy to discern the propriety of this; no deliverance was afterward to be gained, they were never in Egypt again. They were the freed men of God forever; that would show the propriety of the silence of Scripture about it.

There is not a single word in Scripture as to how the sacrifices were brought in: they come in in silence. We find Adam, after he sinned, clothed in “coats of skins,” and Cain and Abel spoken to as if they had heard of it before; and this is the wonderful and clear way in which God shows us His mind. Sin comes in, and sacrifice comes also in as a matter of essential necessity; we are left without a question that blood must come in between Adam and God.

God has had His portion in everything from everlasting. We ought to have more understanding of the bosom of the Father, and that which has origin there; more acquaintance with what is going on in heaven. This is, in fact, the distinguishing characteristic between Israel and the church. They had to do with outward enemies, we with hidden ones with the principalities and powers in heavenly places. We are to be occupied now with what is going on up there; assuredly, the fullness of salvation has called us to it. If our hearts were more familiar with this, there would be more power in worship; but we are, alas! more occupied with the things of earth than the things of heaven.

The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is especially typified by the Passover. It is an ordinance of remembrance. Whenever there is a thing to be remembered by God, it is a thing of perfection a complete thing, not of progression at all.

The great power of the ministration of the Holy Ghost to us is in bringing to remembrance. There is where we are cheated of our reward; we have not ability to remember the things freely given to us of God. All the power of the world and of our failure, is set against us to prevent this remembrance: for instance, we are often filled with other thoughts; and one great end of such, is to weaken our

remembrance of what is done for us in Christ.

“The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.” (Heb. 10:2.) There is a great difference between a conscience and consciousness of sin. The former would be dreadful, but I ought to have a consciousness of sin. The place of memorial now is in our habitations, the blood having been shed once, and forever shed once, and perfected forever we should bear about this stupendous sacrifice day by day. We show forth no new death, but we want to remember the Lord’s death constantly, and what we are made in consequence of what He suffered. It should be a sign upon everything we put our hands to, “a memorial between the eyes,” for there never will be a separation from that blood-shedding.

“That the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth.” If this is not the case, if I am not able night and day to be telling forth of the Lamb slain, why is it? Because the Passover is not remembered by me. They were to be able to answer every enquirer in time to come, and this is the sort of thing Satan would cheat us of. Do we remember that there was one deliverance from Egypt? once the manifesting the memorial to man and to God, and now, it is to be on our hands and on our mouth.

“Let us keep the Feast,” &c. (1 Cor. 5) makes it most definite that this is the character of this Dispensation. We are in the Passover, the Lord’s Passover. God’s ability to pass over Israel in their habitations, made it a Feast to the Lord. The Passover was a Feast of fat things to God. They kept it, but to the Lord. It was a joyful day in Egypt, but it was a greater Feast to Him than to them.

The preciousness of the Blood of Jesus is ever blessed before Him the Lamb who was slain; and knowing that, all that is marked upon me is blessed. Is my hand in all its acting’s, bearing this impress? Am I pleasing God? or am I thinking of sin to be put away? There should be the power of walking with a cleansed conscience, therefore the connection “Holding faith, and a good conscience.” (1 Tim. 1)

True worship is connected with having no more conscience of sins. Is it to be sprinkled in virtue of what He is doing now? No! it is an utter mistake. I am afraid that in many a heart there is a serious and radical defect on this point looking at the work of Jesus now, as savoring of that which was His work when He shed His precious blood. Therefore supposing themselves without the door, while the blood was inside the house.

“By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Hence we may have settled, happy confidence in the remembrance of His death the perfection of what He did, and what He was and we are thus led into the heavenly places as contemplators of the scene there, and should be able to bring down tidings to each other of what is passing in the heart of the Father and of the Son.

We are indeed very strangers to intimacy there, and yet we are there.

Why is there failure? Because the true character of remembrance is not the sufficient food of our hearts. The Lord stir us up to examine more these things.

The Sorrows of Jesus on the Cross

How deep the wounds in Jesu's soul,
When He a curse was made;
When for our sin God's sword awoke,
To smite Him in our stead.
No soothing balm His grief assuaged,
A Man of sorrows He;
My soul, behold Jehovah bruise
His Fellow on the tree.
His well-beloved, His delight,
His own co-equal Son,
Whom angels laud, the joy of heav'n,
The glorious Holy One.
Death's sorrows all encompass'd Him,
To God He cried to save;
Fierce storms and billows answer'd loud,
Wave hurried after wave.
And why did shame, and curse, and wrath,
The guiltless One o'ertake
My soul, adore in wondrous love,
He suffered for thy sake.
Thine was the guilt, the curse thy due,
But Jesus bore it all;
His precious blood hath ransom'd thee,
From death's eternal thrall.
A willing sacrifice was He,
Harmless and undefiled;

The spotless Lamb■the Word made flesh■

God's pure and holy Child.

How great the joy of Jesus now,

He liveth who was dead;

He burst the bands of death and hell■

His captive saints hath freed.

Then let our grateful praises rise,

The woes, the joys, the theme,

Of Him who died and rose again,

His people to redeem.

His praise let heart and life declare,

All glory to His name;

Above the heavens exalt, extol,

And bless the great "I AM."

Jude, verse 11

HISTORICALLY, “the gainsaying of Korah” was prior to the great error of Balsam; but morally, it follows it: for Balsam’s doctrine prepares the way either for the denial of the Lordship and Priesthood of Christ, or else for presumptuous intrusion into both these offices. There are those who assert the license of human will ■ “who have said, With our tongue will we prevail: who is lord over us?” (Psa. 12:4.) These are described by Jude, as “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (vs. 4.) Those who deny the Lordship of Jesus into which He is exalted, because “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2.) will, on the same ground, deny His Priesthood, as the only way of approach to God. Denying the Lordship of Jesus, they are led to refuse all subordinate authority, “defiling the flesh, despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities.”

But the gainsaying of Korah is reached from the very opposite quarter, that is, by men intruding themselves into the place of the Lordship and Priesthood of Christ. This easily follows the error of Balsam, who fain would have been promoted to great honor. And it is this which appears to be especially prefigured in the history of Korah and of his companions.

It had pleased God distinctly to call Aaron and his sons to the Priesthood. “Take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the Priest’s office.” (Ex. 28) According to this order, Aaron held a distinct place from his sons; they were priests, but Aaron was the High Priest. But on Christ being rejected on earth, God called Him up to His right hand, to the office of Great High Priest in heaven, saying unto Him, “Sit Thou at My right hand.” “Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.” This was His call as the Apostle testifies (Heb. 5:5, 6), not to ministry, but to Priesthood. He was anointed with the Holy Ghost at His baptism by John (Matt. 3), tempted of the devil (Matt. 4), and then commenced His gracious ministry on earth, going about doing good, which ended in His rejection by man, but in His exaltation by God. “We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” But as Aaron had his sons, who were priests, so Christ has His brethren, ever needing Him as their Great High Priest; but, nevertheless, themselves consecrated by Him as Priests unto God and His Father. (Rev. 1:5, 6.) “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” (Heb. 2:11.)

The Scripture recognizes four orders of Priesthood. 1. That of Melchisedek. 2. That of Aaron. 3. That of Christ. 4. That of all believers in Christ. It is well to have the three last orders before the mind, in considering the actual and typical character of the gainsaying of Korah.

Korah was a Levite. The Levites were brought into certain nearness to God to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them. (Num. 16:9.) But Korah was not satisfied with this; he affected the Priesthood also. (vs. 10.) In order to this, Korah associated with himself Dathan and Abiram, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben.

Reuben was Jacob's first-born; but God had set aside the right of primogeniture, and had chosen Moses of the tribe of Levi, to be leader of His people Israel. Korah could not well intrude into the place of Aaron, without first undermining the authority of Moses. So the conspiracy is formed against Moses and Aaron. "They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" (vs. 3.) Moses vindicates the authority of Aaron and his priesthood, by treating the pretensions of Korah and the Levites as rebellion against God. "For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?" (vs. 11.) Dathan and Abiram openly defy the authority of Moses. "We will not come up: Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?" (vs. 13.) Korah takes the lead, but is readily followed by the sons of Reuben; and thus united together in rebellion against God's priest, and God's king in Jeshurun, they perish together in the same awful catastrophe.

Such is the gainsaying of Korah; but what is it as applicable to ourselves? what is its antitype under the present dispensation? Christ is God's High Priest in heaven. God hath made the same Jesus that was crucified both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36.) Believers in Jesus are on earth "a royal priesthood." It is no intrusion into Christ's office to assert that all the congregation of the Lord is holy, for He Himself has sanctified them by His blood. He has by the same blood consecrated them as Priests and Kings unto God and His Father. It is no intrusion for them through His blood to enter into the Holiest of all. Where then is room for the gainsaying of Korah? There is the ministry of the New Testament; and the glory of this ministry is so great, the ministry of life instead of death, of righteousness instead of condemnation, of permanent and solid blessing instead of that which was transient, that the suited vessel to bear such a treasure is a poor earthen vessel, in order that the excellency of the power may manifestly be of God. Notwithstanding the real glory of this ministry, the desire sheaved itself early in those who had this ministry, to make themselves a distinct order from their brethren by affecting to be a Priesthood, distinct from the common priesthood of all believers, so as to make themselves necessary as Priests to render valid to men the mercies which God Himself freely bestows, and necessary "for men" in things pertaining to God. The changing the ministry of reconciliation into a priesthood, however modified, answers to the gainsaying of Korah, because it is virtually an intrusion into Christ's Priesthood. This change was necessarily followed by making the gospel a modified law, and reducing it to a system of ordinances, taking Judaism for its pattern instead of its contrast. The assumption of an order of Priesthood, distinct from that of all believers, must be offensive unto God, inasmuch as it dishonors the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ, as the sure ground of confidence for a sinner to approach God with acceptance. It is the assertion of a principle, as if the sinner needed the mediation of a Priest to bring him unto God, or to bring the sacrifice and offering of Christ unto him; when Christ Himself has said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." And again, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach." Now the idea of a mediating Priest, in other words, a distinct order of men to do something for us God ward, or to render valid something from God to us-ward, tends to obscure the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only immediate object of salvation. The glory of God is now seen "in the face (that is, in the person and work) of the Lord Jesus Christ," and the god of this world craftily obscures this glory by means of

setting up a human priesthood. The very thought of needing the intervention of others, cuts into the shade the glory of the Priesthood of Christ, as that which is able to carry the believer safely through his course here unto glory, according as it is written, "He is able to save to the uttermost [that is, right through from beginning to the end,] those who come to God through Him."

But intrusion into the Priesthood of Christ can hardly be without intrusion into His Lordship also. Those who affect a priesthood will soon lord it over God's heritage-imposing on them doctrines and practices of which Christ and His Apostles have said nothing. High as an Apostle was in authority, he could say, "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpless of your joy." And the lordly priesthood of corrupt Christendom has largely vindicated to itself "the gainsaying of Korah," by teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and forcing a system of worship on men's consciences which God has not commanded.

The way of Cain, the error of Balsam, and the gainsaying of Korah, have no doubt a strong moral connection. Will-worship, worldly preferment, and man superseding Christ, must appear to the least thinking spiritual mind as characterizing corrupt Christianity. These three characteristic principles were at work in the Apostles' days, and are still at work, and will work on till the mystery of iniquity is consummated in the revelation of "the man of sin;" and we may well tremble when we think of those who perished in the gainsaying of Korah, of what is the irreversible doom of Babylon, and of the Beast, and of the False Prophet. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balsam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah."

What a solemn responsibility rests on the saints to maintain all the prerogatives of Christ inviolate, and to resent any intrusion into His offices, as the most flagrant in. So that in contrast with "the woe" denounced above, we may know the full blessing of being able to say, "Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen!"

Fragments

The salvation of our souls is the result of God's eternal purpose, and Christ's work.

Let us be careful not to separate "The Truth," the Spirit of truth, and the Written Word of truth.

He that steps out of his own nothingness steps into it.

It is a mean condition not to be content with mean things.

Leave all your matters in the hands of God, who performeth all things for you, and He will put into your hands what of them He would have you do, and show you, if you wait on Him, when and how He would have you do them.

May we, beloved, seek after simple, practical godliness, humble, unostentatious piety, befitting our stations and conditions; and in place of high things and peat things, purity of heart, simplicity and godly sincerity, poverty of spirit, humbleness of mind, deliverance from the spirit of the world, and fleshly lusts, which war against the soul! May saints be truly godly saints, their lives conformed to Christ; and may teachers and guides keep within their measure of faith and grace, and only declare what God has taught themselves.

Worship

WE can only offer spiritual worship on the ground of the shed blood of Jesus. The unregenerate know not what they worship (John 4:22): their thought is about places of worship, so called, rather than either how or who they worship. Not so the believer. He knows that God is a Spirit, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of the Father, crucified and risen, is his Saviour; and he instinctively, as it were, responds to our Lord's declaration, that "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." (John 4:23.) He looks back with shame on the time of his "dead works" when he ignorantly worshipped; when custom and formality only impelled him, because he knew not the Father nor the Son. Or, he may have to charge himself with folly at a later period, at discovering that his thoughts of God had been so stunted and imperfect, and that he had apprehended so little of the infinite glory and power of His counsel and grace, in his approaches to God. His soul now, however, truly worships: he draws nigh by the blood of the Son; and thus, by the Spirit, finds access unto the Father.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect pattern of a worshipper. In that most awful hour, when His soul was made an offering for sin, when He had to grapple with death and hell, and was forsaken of God, He worshipped ■ "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.... Thou art He that took Me out of the womb; Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts," &c.

It is not human attainment, but God's manifestation of Himself in His own Son, realized with power on our hearts and consciences, that enables us to be "true worshippers." As long as our thoughts are occupied about doing great things for God, we shall be cold, listless, and formal; but when our souls apprehend the amazing greatness of His grace, wisdom, and power to us-ward in Christ, we are constrained to worship and serve with reverence and godly fear. May we be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus!

There was, doubtless, much of the spirit of worship in the earliest ages of the world. Who can think that Adam experienced the suitability of the clothing which the Lord God in His grace put upon him and his helpmeet, covering over all the guilt and shame they had so deeply felt, and that he could at this time have called his wife "the mother of all living," without feelings of adoration and praise? Or, can we suppose that righteous Abel could present to God a figure of Christ bearing sin, which the bleeding sacrifice represented, without deep emotions of admiring gratitude? Or, could Enoch walk with God for three hundred years, having the testimony that he pleased God, without oft-repeated adoration and thanksgiving? Could the patriarch Noah, when the smoke of the clean beasts ascended up to heaven, and he remembered the wonderful salvation that God had wrought for him, and the grace that he had found, fail in blessing and praising the God of mercy and truth?

But it was reserved for the days of Abraham and Isaac for the subject of worship to be more distinctly introduced to us, when he said to the young men, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship." (Gen. 22:5.) The father of the faithful was before the Lord, with

the sacrifice that He had appointed. His thoughts were of the grace, and wisdom, and power of God ■ “God,” said he, “will provide Himself a Lamb;” and he presented, in a figure, that offering, “accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.” (Heb. 11:19.) Blessed elements of worship indeed! God just and yet a Saviour, the Provider of the Lamb, the Raiser of the dead, calling forth the deepest tone of self-denial, and most fervent utterances of adoration. Would, beloved, that we could catch more of the same fervency of spirit, and believing perceptions of the God of all grace, who “quickeneth all things,” so that joy and gratitude might fill and overflow our souls. “Abraham,” said Jesus, “rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

In the instructive and mystic scene of Abraham’s servant seeking a wife for Isaac, the man of faith is twice presented to us as worshipping the Lord. But as we have seen before, it was not the effort of the creature that was the moving cause, but the goodness and tender mercy of Jehovah. He recognized God as standing in covenant relation with Abraham ■ “O Lord God of my master Abraham.” (Gen. 24:12.) When he found that the invisible God had so graciously listened to his prayer, and so faithfully guided his steps, he could not forbear bowing his head, and giving unto Jehovah the glory due unto His name.

The Holy Ghost, in Heb. 11:21, calls our attention to the dying patriarch Jacob worshipping; and a fine example indeed it is of fervent and spiritual adoration and praise. He acknowledged how true God had been to His name, “God Almighty.” He gratefully spoke of the bountiful mercy of God, before whom Abraham and Isaac did walk, which fed him all his life long, and as the Angel which had redeemed him from all evil. (Gen. 48:3, 15, 16.)

The instances we have looked at present us with examples of individual worshippers, not a company of persons unitedly worshipping, but solitary individuals so realizing their personal obligations to God, and feeling the power of His mercy and goodness in their souls, as constrains them to adore and praise. They serve to teach us some of the principles of worship, and of course they remain unaltered by any number of saints being similarly and unitedly engaged. The question should not be with us as to the place or quantity of worship so much as to the quality. Is it acceptable to God? Am I worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth? should be the questions by which we should test our spiritual sacrifices. There is no busy effort in true worship; it is the natural result of faith. If faith is not in exercise on the grace of God in Christ, we are not offering up spiritual sacrifices. When the eyes of the blind man were opened, he believed first, then worshipped (John 9:38); and so when the people of Israel believed, and heard that the Lord had visited them, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. (Ex. 4:31.) Again, when the glorious news of redemption from Egypt, and all its bondage, by the slain Lamb, was proclaimed to them, then, we are told, “the people bowed their heads and worshipped.” (Ex. 12:27.) And in that memorable manifestation the Lord God made of Himself to Moses, when He hid His servant in the cleft of the rock, we are told that Moses “bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.” (Ex. 34:8.)

Do not all these instances teach us, beloved, that we must have our souls much exercised with the person and work of our most glorious Emmanuel, if we would be found by our God in a worshipping state of heart? We must, by faith, be drawing water from the wells of salvation, and often eating the flesh and blood of the Lamb of God; in short, be not only deeply sensible that we have nothing but what we have received, but increasingly apprehending the breadth, and length,

and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and in conscious helplessness and unworthiness, waiting on God through His Spirit, to work in us those “fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” (Phil. 1:11.)

It is in the New Testament of the “grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ,” that the true light shineth concerning principles of worship as well as everything else. The Prince of Life Himself, who most truly said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,” is there seen living and walking with men; but still, without doubt, it is only the more plainly revealed, that worship is not the laborious effort of the creature bringing something to commend himself to God, but the infinite grace and kindness of the Father of mercies and God of all comfort so blessing the creature, as to call forth all that is within him to bless His holy name. In Matt. 14. we see an example of this. The disciples were in a ship in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves and the wind contrary. Jesus went unto them walking on the sea, and said, “Be of good cheer,” &c. Peter walked on the water, and when the Lord and Peter were come into the ship the wind ceased■a great deliverance was wrought for them. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, “Of a truth Thou art the SON of God.” How simple, yet how melodious, this vibration of the chords of their hearts to God’s testimony of Him, “This is My beloved Son!” Personal advantage seems forgotten, because the eye of faith is wholly resting on the infinite glory of the great mystery of godliness■God manifest in the flesh.

But a day came when the same disciples ceased to worship. Ignorance and unbelief clouded their spiritual vision, and the heart, no longer in tune to the melody of worship, grew despondent and doubting. “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel,” &c. (Luke 24:13, &c.) It reads us a solemn and instructive lesson, and shows us what we are when our souls are not believingly and intelligently occupied with the Son of God crucified, risen, and glorified. Christ must make such feel their folly, and slowness of heart to believe the testimony of the Scriptures concerning Himself. The heart must be in peace with God through Christ, to constitute us true and happy worshippers. We must know that we have ready access to the Father by the blood of Jesus. At the close of this same chapter, we again see the blessed Lord opening the understanding of the eleven, that they might understand the Scriptures. He testifies to them what is written of His own sufferings, and death, and resurrection, the gospel of remission of sins that should be preached in His name: He leads them out as far as Bethany and blesses them; and then we are told “they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.” Those who learn of, and are led by Jesus, will be surely blest by Him; and therefore will be true and happy worshippers.

Further, we might notice that worship in the coming glory is grounded on the same principle of mercy given and received. Hence, the new song is, “Thou art worthy... for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests,” &c.

Fleshly confidence and indulgences are mighty enemies to the spirit of true worship. The priests of old washed their hands and feet when they went into the tabernacle to accomplish the service of God (Ex. 30:18-20); and very needful it is for us to feel keenly that in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing, if we would realize boldness in entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and liberty in worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. In proportion as we rejoice in

Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, we are able to worship God in the spirit.

The more the sufferings and glory of the Lamb of God are occupying our souls, the more we aball feel the presence of the Father and the Son with us. (John 14:23.) By the blood of Jesus alone, shall we be guided, by the Spirit, into the holiest of all (Heb. 10:19, 20): we then “bring an offering, and come into His courts,” we sing “unto the Lord”■ “to the Rock of our salvation;” we come before His presence with thanksgiving, and bless His name; we worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker, our Redeemer, our Shepherd, our God; because we realize that “it is He that hath made us, and not we our; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” The more we praise, the more we shall desire to praise. It is a healthful and fruitful exercise indeed. God so graciously condescends to accept our thanksgivings, that He says,” Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me; “and in Psalms 67, though a millennial psalm, the principle is seen of God’s blessing being connected with the people’s thanksgiving.” Let all the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us,” &c.

May we, beloved, have more faith in the riches of the grace of God, that we may more truly give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name, and worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Amen and amen.

Let us not expect to realize the presence of Christ in our meetings, unless we honestly come together in His name■Christ “in the midst” being the heartfelt object of attraction. Such sit before Him, and yield to His sovereign rule and guidance.

The Ways of God

“Stormy wind fulfilling His word.” ■ Ps. 148:8.

THERE is strength and power in the inanimate creature, before which the wisdom and strength of man are alike futile. But God has measured the strength and power of every creature, not only by His omnipotence, but by His love also. “I am persuaded,” says the apostle, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” Blessed thought! every creature may try to effect this separation, but none shall prevail. But is not the thought, while equally blessed, yet more wonderful to conceive that every creature has its distinct mission, either in judgment or mercy, or in mercy on the one side and judgments on the other? “For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence;” all these creatures have their distinct mission from the Lord to fulfill His word. So also the stormy wind, the most uncontrollable element, has its mission from the Lord to fulfill His word. Does Jonah fly from the presence of the Lord? God knows how to arrest him, and to get glory to His own name; and in the result to show mercy even to Jonah. “The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.” (Jonah 1:4.) But it was not broken; that was not the mission of the great wind; it had respect to Jonah, and to him alone, and it fulfilled the word of the Lord. But God had other creatures at His command in reference to Jonah. “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.” (vs. 17.) And again after Jonah’s disappointment, because that mercy rejoiced against judgment, and that the Ninevites were spared on their repentance, “the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief.” (Jonah 4:6.) Then again “God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted.” (vss. 7, 8.) “The great wind,” “the fish,” “the gourd,” “the worm,” “the vehement east wind,” had each of them a distinct mission from God, and fulfilled His word.

Does Jehoshaphat, after his signal deliverance, join himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who did very wickedly, and do they make ships in Ezion-gaber? “Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.” (2 Chron. 20) The stormy wind fulfilled His word.

If “Euroclydon” rages in the Mediterranean, it fulfills its mission in bringing honor to the Lord’s prisoner, the only one calm and collected in the midst of danger, and for whose sake all that sailed with him in the ship were spared. (Acts 27:24.)

But if God “commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which Meth up the waves of the deep” (Pa. 107:26), “He also stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the

people” (Psa. 65:7): and intelligent creatures, in their passions and interests as uncontrollable by human power as the waves of the sea, have their mission. And God can say to the one or the other, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” (Job 38:11.)

If it be marvelous in our eyes that things unintelligent and inanimate have not only their mission, but are made subservient to God’s purpose of blessing His people, for “not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father,” our admiration becomes deeper when we find the opposition of human passions, and complication of human interests, made to serve a definite end, and to go straightforward to that end. Such appears to be the instruction to be drawn from the symbol of the Cherubim, as seen by the prophet Ezekiel. Such controlling and directing power is also presented to us in “the Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (Rev. 5:6)-full power of order and control under universal superintendence.

That God effectuates His purpose by means of moral and intelligent, and therefore responsible agents, who have nevertheless not the least conception of what they are thus doing, or the purpose they are subserving, is almost an overwhelming thought; yet it must be received as an axiom by those who bow to the authority of Scripture. The Lord sends the proud “Assyrian against an hypocritical nation; against the people of His wrath He gives him a charge. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so. It is in his heart to destroy and out of nations not a few.” (Ise. 6-7.) Oaesar Augustus issues his decree for taking the census of the empire, for wise political reasons; little did he mean, neither did his heart think, thus to bring about the accomplishment of a remarkable prophecy concerning Him who is Lord of lords, and King of kings. The wisest men, the ablest politicians, the most renowned conquerors, whilst they are pursuing heartily and intelligently the object they have proposed to themselves, are ignorantly subserving another purpose which is not in their hearts. Religion prejudice and ignorance have their mission, as well as the stormy wind, or proud Assyrian. “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers: but those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.” (Acts 3:17, 18.)

But the most interesting as well as the most wonderful power of order and control is found within the Church itself. Regarding the Church in its actual condition, it appears to us in hopeless disorder and confusion; yet, notwithstanding this appearance, the only-wise Master-builder is rearing a building of perfect symmetry and beauty, in due time to be manifested, without a single stone either wanting or out of place. (Rev. 21:9-27.)

In the rearing of this building He is now employing various workmen; yet these workmen are working by different plans of their own, often pulling down each other’s building, because it is not wording to their fashion, and sometimes building again what they themselves have destroyed. In appearance the several workmen have no common plan, no rule, no compass, no plummet; rearing several detached buildings, and each one glorying in the work of his hands, as if they were destroying the Temple instead of building it. This must doubtless be to the damage of all. But under the superintendence of Him whose servants they are, they are all working for His end, although their passions, vanity, self-seeking, and littleness, may have an end of their own, or make them think that the Lord’s end can only be attained by their way. It is truly blessed when the Lord.

Himself is honored in His way as well as in His end. But notwithstanding the follies and bye-ways of His servants, He is working for His end through them; and we are able in some measure to understand how He is doing this.

“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” (Mark 16:20.) Now it is only just so far as the Lord is working with His servants that they are working with and for Him. (2 Cor 6:1.) He will set aside and burn up “the wood, hay, and stubble;” that for which their energy, it may be, has been spent, and in which their chief interest has been occupied. But that for which He hath wrought mightily in them (and His very might to calm and patient, compared with human energy), “the gold, silver, and precious stones,” He will preserve.

The point here is, not which of the servants is acting most according to the Lord’s plan, or how much loss many of the Lord’s servants will have to suffer; but how it is, that with such a miserable set of tools, the great Master-worker produces such exquisite workmanship, in due time to be manifested as that city which has the glory of God.

But if all the Lord’s workmen are under Him working for a definite end exactly in proportion as He works with them, it necessarily follows, that in that in which the Lord works with His servants, they are co-workers one with another, they are really working for one end; howbeit in their hearts they may repudiate the thought of being associated in common labor. That for which they are working in their own hearts is one object; that for which the Lord is using them, and working with them, is another. Humbling indeed it is that it should be so; and that regard for Him, whose servants we are, should have so little power in setting self aside. Great was the comfort to the apostle to have a true yoke-fellow in Timothy or Titus; but although he had few likeminded with him in his singleness of eye to the service of the Lord, he nevertheless acknowledges others as his fellow-helpers unto the kingdom of God. “These only,” says he, “are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort to me.” (Col. 4:11.) Many of the servants of Christ might be wayward and self-seeking; some entangled in Jewish traditions, others in Gentile philosophy; they were no comfort to the apostle, and instead of strengthening were by their ways apparently weakening his hands; nevertheless, the apostle acknowledges them as servants of Christ, and his fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. They must stand or fall to their own Master; but in fidelity to that Master, he must acknowledge them in whatever way the Master working with them was accrediting their work. If they really were ministers of Christ, they must, under the Master-worker’s hand, be helping on His work.

Had not the apostle been able to take, fellowship in labor on another and higher ground, than that of ostensible co-operation, he had so few “like-minded” that he might almost have been driven to express himself, as the prophet, in felt desolation ■ “And I only am left;” or to adopt the ready human way of party making which he so strongly repudiates, “Who is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.” (Luke 9:49, 50.)

PATIENCE■Our trials may sometimes appear both long and sharp. God tries our patience as well as faith. He exhorts us to “let patience have her perfect work,” as well as to “cast not away our confidence which hath great recompence of reward.” (James 1:4; Heb. 10:35.) We may well wait upon the Lord, and be of good courage, for He is faithful that promised.

‘He will not always chide,

But when the hope seems least,

If now thy faith abide,

Then shalt thou be releas’d.’

Ex. 10:24 to end

WE see from the 9th verse that God's purpose for Israel was for them to keep a Feast, and in 1 Cor. 5 the same is applied as the present condition of God's people. The mention of the leaven there couples it definitely with the Feast of the Passover—they were delivered from Egypt; we are a people delivered from the wrath to come: the object of it unceasing, unchanging joy. It was to be "a Feast unto the Lord." The scene in Egypt was laid in the deepest trial; but the purpose of God was for them to keep a Feast. Nothing is of more importance than to consider our exceeding short coming in outward manifestation, by the failure of this condition of soul. Our hearts well know that this fruit is not pressed, so as to yield its own juice in present support to the soul. Glory be to His grace, we have always to sing that our failure does not affect the security of our souls, because we are set in Christ. Though we may not be keeping the Feast to the Lord, there is One keeping it whoever rejoices the heart of God: we have Jesus, by whom God wrought out all His pleasure, and we are in Him. God knows no disappointment in Him. He is the Man of His right hand; but that does not militate against the failure of our ways.

And not only is this table the Feast, but it gives its coloring to the whole dispensation. "The table in the wilderness" is the character of this dispensation; spread by God, guarded by God, but presenting one unbroken scene, all of God's doing; we had no part in it. We are brought into the house by the Father; it is for the children within the house to be merry, and God has provided for Himself joy in the sorrow; and where we fail is in not apprehending the character God affixed to this scene. We are to have joy in the sorrows; and if you fail to realize this, you fail is something that the joys of heaven will never be able to give you; for then the sorrows will be over. Get out of the place, and the occasion is lost forever; get into the glory, and you cease to realize trial. It is unmixed joy.

We so shrink from trial now. Why? Because we know so little of the joy in the trial, and God alone knows the terrible trials of the wilderness.

There were two things specially marked here. The denial of letting the children go (vss. 7-11); there is the denial of Pharaoh (the wicked one) to God's purpose, that they should keep a Feast in the wilderness. And how could they keep a Feast of joy while their little ones were in Egypt? A Feast implies circumstances of joy. We cannot keep it without a merry heart; and it is said that "a merry heart is a continual feast." Pharaoh knew it. The attempt was most crafty, to get the tenderest object of their affections absent. He says, "Leave the object of your affections behind, and you go. Do not hazard all you have, but reserve something. Evil is before you, wilderness fare; do not expose them!" Had they yielded, God's purpose would have been impeded.

In verse 24 (after Moses' denial of this), Pharaoh proposes to leave the flocks behind, and to take the little ones. "The flocks behind!" still objects of affection, alas! though of a lesser kind: they were their property. Moses' reply does, to my mind, express most simply the true nature of a Feast, viz., real dependence on God for everything. Moses, by the Holy Ghost, tells Pharaoh, "We know not wherewith to serve the Lord till we be come thither;" everything they had was given by God to

serve Him with.

Psalm 63 was a song of merriment “in the wilderness of Judah,” as the heading tells us; in one sense, the desert, yet a wilderness of praise. Why of Judah? Because God was with them. He had undertaken all for them to the end. They were delivered to Himself; and this must place Israel in dependence on Him. The food of their table, their shoes, their garments, the manna; it was His place to provide all. They had nothing to do but to hold the Feast; but that that hindered would be the leaving anything in Egypt. Pharaoh tried first to keep their persons, then the children, then the flocks; but not till they were clean delivered from Egypt, and apart from it could the Feast be kept. And surely this same thing is at the root of our individual failure. It is not our persons only that are to be devoted to God, but everything we possess is to be His. Our property, our little ones, Are they in Egypt? Is it the tenderness of Pharaoh, or of God, I am exercising with regard to my little ones? Have we anything left in Egypt for the day of destruction? Oh! the tendency of all our hearts to lean to flesh and blood. It was Pharaoh’s aim to bring them to independency.

Jesus carried out the separation fully, and left none of His little ones in Egypt. He was the true Nan-rite. He knew the depth of sorrow in that broken heart. That separated Son could tell the joy of the Lord’s strength. Though He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He kept the conditions of the Feast, and knew the true meaning of its being “a Feast unto the Lord.”

The whole scene of the Passover is brought before us in 1 Corinthians 5. “Purge out the old leaven.” This would take in everything, “that ye may be a new lump,” &c. even as Christ. Would you know why you are unleavened? Because true of us in Christ. God can say, “Amen” to you and to me, because He kept the Feast. But there is something definite to you and to me besides. Our Feast may be with terrible crying and tears, but the Feast is to be above all my sorrow. That is what Israel did not know, but we are called to it. In spirit like Abraham (Rom. 4), “to hope against hope.” Temptation, tribulation, failure, these will be, but the Feast is to be kept; nevertheless, let it give its stamp to every step of the way.

One word more. Any word that skews the depth of grace is a terrible word. “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.” (vs. 8.) The old leaven was the flesh-pots of Egypt. All was to be brought out before they partook of the Lamb. But what is the distinction between the “old leaven” and “the leaven of malice and wickedness?”

God presents us with an object, a Feast—the Lord Jesus Christ’s work and person. But what may we be keeping the Feast with? We may be filled with the love of the world, in some shape or other—dress, relations of life, &c., &c. We may be filled also with the “leaven of malice and wickedness.” I believe there is a sharpness in these words that none but the children of God know. God is, as it were, going into a disquisition with His children, with regard to their dispositions, &c. What may you have in your heart at the Feast? “Malice.” It is an awful word. It is probing with the probe of God the desperate evil of our hearts.

Here is what God would have us put away—any root of evil, guile, deceit, &c.—that the Feast may be in spirit and in truth, to the Lord, “with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Israel was to hold everything in readiness to serve the Lord. I say the experience of the Feast was conditional, not the security of it. It is eternally secure in Jesus. But let us observe the conditions.

The victory will be ours in proportion as we keep all this evil under.

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

IF we would have our own sorrows soothed, our own wounds healed, and our troubled breasts calmed, we must meditate much on the wounds and sorrows of Jesus, when “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him,” when “He was wounded for our transgressions.”

THERE is a temptation when men do not please us, for us on our part to displease God. If we do not seek to please ourselves, but God, He will show us how to act when men displease us. “Even Christ pleased not Himself.”

Gen. 22

IT is well to be prepared unto every good work■to be ready at all times to do the will of God. We know not how soon it may please God to put our faith to the test■it may be sharply. Let it not take us by surprise. Let us not count even a fiery trial a strange thing, This is the time for the trial of our faith, and it is more precious than of gold that perisheth. Tribulation in one form or other characterizes our wilderness journey, and when one trial is over let us prepare for another; for when our faith has been exercised, and our spirit tried, it is often to fit us for deeper exercise and severer trial. Thus it was with Abraham. He had passed through much trial in connection with famine, the untoward ways of Lot, the mistaken path concerning Hagar, the fear of Abimelech, the painful circumstances connected with Ishmael; and now he was called to the most unexpected and heavy trial of offering up his beloved Isaac, for whom he had waited on God with such enduring patience, and to whom the promises of God concerning all nations were made. The emergency was sudden, and the trial, both spiritually and naturally, perhaps of the deepest kind, that mortal, fallible man was ever called to honor God in.

But the man of faith was ready for the call. He heard the gracious and authoritative voice of God, saying, "Abraham! Abraham!" and, apparently, with undisturbed composure of spirit, he replied, "Behold, here I am." He is immediately before this presented to us calling "on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God" (ch. 21:33), and now, in the stillness of the night watches, his ear is opened to the voice of the God of promise, and most sorrowful and trying as the path may be in which he is called to walk, yet the light of heaven shines upon it with unmistakably clear guidance.

How deeply important it is, beloved, that we should be much in the habit of calling on the name of the Lord. It has been well said, that

'Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright,'

and the divine statute is, "Them that honor me, I will honor." In the carnal scene connected with the weaning of Isaac, the patriarch was ill prepared for such a service as that we are considering. We see how this feasting had dimmed his spiritual vision to the perception of the ill behavior of the "son of the bondwoman," and how reluctant he was to rule in this instance according to the mind of God. He stood reprov'd, for "fleshly lusts war against the soul;" but after this we see him in the grove of Beersheba, with uplifted heart, calling upon "the name of the Lord, the everlasting God," and therefore ready for the service of the living and true God. (See chapters 21:8, 12, 33.) And so it should be with us; for if we would be calm in emergencies, ready for the service of God, and capable of being used for His honor and glory, we must be found not indulging in fleshly lusts, but mortifying our members which are upon the earth, seeking to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and calling upon the name of the Lord. "He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." He that waiteth on his Master shall be honored. "Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." (Job 17:9; Prov. 27:18; Matt. 6:6.)

I repeat that Abraham was led into a plain path; nothing could exceed the clearness of the way he was called to walk in. First, he was told what to do; he was to “offer for a burnt offering,” his son, his only and beloved Isaac—that son for whom he had waited on God for twenty-five years, concerning whom God had made such promises, and whose weaning he had celebrated with such joyous festivity and gladness—that only son, that affectionate and obedient lad, who lay so near his father’s heart, must unreservedly be consumed to ashes in yonder mountain. Secondly, he must hasten to this service at once. “Take now thy son.” Thirdly, the place of service is pointed out; he must go “into the land of Moriah” to execute the divine commission. These plain details left no room for inquiry, opened no door for delay; they comprehended all that faith needed for obeying the voice of God. Abraham therefore “rose up early in the morning,” and proceeded “to the place of which God had told him,” to carry out the heavenly mandate, taking Isaac, the wood, the fire, and knife, for the necessary purpose of carrying out the word of God.

No doubt there was much deep, living communion with God, during the three days’ journey to Mount Moriah. The man of faith was now walking in the quickener of the dead—the Almighty God.” This was the spring of the patriarch’s hope, the anchor of his soul, the sole incentive of his self-renouncing obedience. The God of the covenant commanded, and this was enough for believing Abraham, who was able, by the grace of God, to turn the trial into a special occasion of worship—“I and the lad will go yonder and worship.” This was faith indeed. He did not make flesh his arm. Had the claim of natural affection, unduly preponderated, he could not have gone a step towards Mount Moriah, much less have bound his beloved, son to the altar, and lifted up the knife to slay him. Had he attempted to make the promises of God in Isaac more secure, like Uzzah put forth his hand to stay the ark of God from falling, he might have sought to persuade himself that he had been deceived, that Isaac must not be offered, because that in him all nations were to be blessed. But he trusted in the faithful God who cannot deny Himself. He felt that it became a servant to obey his master, and to rest in the wisdom, grace, and faithfulness of “the Almighty God” to confirm His own word in what way He pleased. Abraham well knew that Isaac must live, even though he be burnt to ashes, for the unalterable word of the Lord was, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Resurrection was here the sustaining thought of the Patriarch’s mind, he went forward, therefore, spite of appearances, and his own natural feelings, to obey the word of God. He reckoned upon God’s power; his confidence was alone in the faithfulness of God to His own word. “By faith Abraham, when he was tired, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received, him in a figure.” (Heb. 11:17, 18, 19)

True faith in God makes us peaceful in the most trying circumstances, because it deals only with the God of truth, and triumphs spite of feelings, reasonings of the creature, and the aspect of circumstances, for it rests in the unfailing God to make good His own unalterable word. Hence faith can trust God where it cannot see Him.

‘The hope that’s built upon His word

Can ne’er be overthrown.’

The trial of our faith is precious to God, and profitable to us. Faith must be exercised to grow. When we really abide the trial, He will say, “It is enough,” and spare our feelings, as well as honor

us and comfort our souls. We see this in verses 10 to 18 of this chapter. When Abraham manifested full subjection to God, as well as confidence in His power and faithfulness, then the angel of the Lord called out of heaven unto him, saying, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, &c., for now I know that thou fearest God," &c. We know what blessing followed.

Can anything, beloved, more powerfully exhort us to trust God "at all times" than this affecting narrative? Does it not loudly exemplify that "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous?" May we be always ready and willing to do the will of God! We know how perfect is the example of Christ, who "was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

'O holy Saviour, Friend unseen,
Since on Thine arm thou bid'st us lean,
Help us, throughout life's changing scene,
By faith to cling to Thee.'

Making Ready for the Marriage

“The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” ■ Rev. 19:7.

IT is blessed to find that the testimony of God in the Scriptures, concerning our standing in His presence, is to the finished work of Christ. “Ye are complete in Him.” (Col. 2) The Son of God has sanctified us with His own blood, and made us nigh to God, “having obtained eternal redemption for us.” It is, therefore, by grace, and not in any degree by creature-merit, that every believer is fitted for the presence of God, and will be presented before Him faultless with exceeding joy, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Rom. 10:4.)

But there is another point treated of in this portion of the word of God, which is the practically preparing ourselves for the marriage supper; purifying ourselves, that we may “not be ashamed before Him at His coming;” cleansing our hearts and ways, and being diligent in every good work, that “we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless;” separating from everything which we know will not be “found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus.” It is most blessedly true that then will be “granted” to the bride of the Lamb, as a substantial reality, what is now imputed to faith, “the righteousness of God.” “To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” It was a grant, because it is all of grace. But we are also told that she had “made herself ready.” She expected the marriage, and therefore prepared for it. We must know that our sins are put away by the sacrifice of Christ, and that God has given us a standing of perfectness in Christ risen and glorified, thus taking us out of our old Adam standing of ruin and guilt, delivering us from sin and curse, the law and death, and making us joint-heirs with Christ, so as to leave no question whatever between God and our own souls, before we can truly be said to be making ourselves ready for the marriage. When we are brought to see that the purging of sin, and justification, is not our work, but the work of God in Christ; and that we are brought into all this blessing by faith in Jesus, we can give glory to God, and worship, knowing that He that has called us, and fitted us for glory in Christ, is also preparing a place in glory for us by Christ, and will also consummate our everlasting union with Him, and accordingly we go forth to meet the Bridegroom. But if there be misgivings in the soul about forgiveness of sins, and standing in the perfection of Christ, how can there be a making ready for the marriage? God has given us His word, in which He plainly states, that He has forgiven sins, justified from all things, and made complete in Christ every believer in Jesus; and this is enough. We believe God means what He says; see the accomplishment of this wondrous grace in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son; and whatever men or devils may say, or circumstances may be, we rely on the faithfulness of God; and thus feeling we are on unquestionable ground, rejoice in hope of glory, and make ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. And, beloved, what is the present attitude of our souls? Has the love of the Lord’s return to take us unto Himself taken root in our hearts? Do our ways and conversation show that we are making ready for the marriage? The knowledge of it, merely as a doctrine, will have no power on our daily walk; but if we really feel the coming of our Great God and Saviour to be the hope of our

souls, we shall set little value, on present things, counting them vain and perishing. The “better and enduring substance” brought so very near to faith and hope, constrains us to disentangle ourselves from associations and circumstances which we are assured will not bear the all-searching light of that day. And this process will go on; for as knowledge of God and of ourselves increases, so will fresh discoveries be made of the deceitfulness of our hearts, and our consciences will heed the call for confession and cleansing in the presence of God. The lamp needs frequent trimming, as well as repeated renewing’s of oil, in order to shine brightly; and we know that our Lord would have our loins girded about, and our lights burning, while He assures our hearts that “the night is far spent, the day is at hand.” Beloved, how does this assurance affect us?

Let us meditate much on the majesty and glory of our adorable Emmanuel, and on God’s estimate of His death; let us often feed on His broken body and shed blood; let our spirits more abundantly catch the fervent feelings of His heart now in the presence of God for us; let us continually think upon the cost and glory of our eternal redemption, and we shall find an earnest desire and power springing up in our hearts, to make ourselves ready for the marriage.

Grace and Peace

THE marvelous character of grace is, that God gave His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins—that we might live through Him—to bring us to God.

Through the death of Christ, peace has been made—He hath made peace through the blood of His cross. God, therefore, preaches peace by Jesus Christ—an already accomplished peace. “The gospel of the grace of God” is, therefore, “the gospel of peace.” Faith thus views God, not as imputing trespasses, but proclaiming peace by Jesus, and has rest and assurance, finding peace in God’s presence through our Lord Jesus Christ.

O how sweet to view the flowing

Of His soul-redeeming blood,

With Divine assurance knowing

That it made my peace with God.

Every believer in Christ, however weak his faith, has life. “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:31); but a believer only has peace in his soul, when he believes, that, by Christ, God justifies him from all things; that however ungodly he has been, he is now made the righteousness of God in Christ. Every believer has this blessed standing of perfection in Christ, however he may fail to apprehend it; for “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” “The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all them that believe.” (Rom. 10:4, 3:22.) God hath made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21.) Peace then is the result of Christ’s work, and not of our work. “The work of righteousness shall be peace; the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.” (Isa. 32:17.)

It is then by believing this grace of God in Christ, that we have peace with God, and therefore communion. Satan tries to interrupt our communion with God by getting us to look into ourselves, our frames, feelings, experience, &c., for satisfaction and comfort. The end of this always must be the discovery of indwelling sin, and evil principles entirely opposed to the holiness of God, the soul therefore finds misery and wretchedness; but when, by the power of faith, we look away from self, to God’s estimate of Christ’s work, and to all that blessed fullness God has freely given us in Christ risen and glorified, then peace flows again into our souls, and communion with God is restored. Our thoughts of Christ’s worth at the best are very low and poor. Our eternal blessing depends upon God’s estimate of Christ’s work. Our present enjoyment will be just in proportion as we are having communion with God concerning Christ and His work for us. The flesh cannot rise above miserable self. The Spirit testifies of Christ, and leads us away from ourselves to that blessed holiness and grace which hates sin, puts it away, and justifies the ungodly. God commends His love to us.

It is because Christ has borne all the wrath and condemnation that was due to us on account of our sins, that there is now no condemnation to us; add it is because Christ was "forsaken" upon the cross, that we can never be forsaken by God—that nothing can separate us from His love. Nothing can ever prevail against us, because God has been for us in the cross of His Son, and now is for us in the ever-prevalent intercession of the Great High Priest, as well as in making all things work together for our good. His purpose is, that grace shall so triumph, that, in the ages to come, He may show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

It is because of our new life, righteousness, sanctification, and completeness in Christ risen and glorified, that sin shall not have dominion over us; for we are not under the law, but under grace. If we were under the law, we must die as the consequence of our sin; but, being under grace, if we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.

The grace that sought and found us,

Alone can keep us clean.

The Great High Priest maintains us in acceptance with God, through the perpetual efficacy of that one offering which He once offered, when "He gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor."

It is lamentable to hear Christians say, "If I perish, I perish at His feet." This is an impossibility. There may be a small measure of faith in the soul which so speaks, though mixed with much ignorance and unbelief. When Peter, feeling himself too vile for association with Jesus, fell down at His knees, and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord! the possibility of perishing was never once referred to by our Lord, but quite the reverse; for Jesus not only said to him, "Fear not," but, as He usually did, He exceeded the suppliant's utmost thought, by promising him honor and success in His service—"From henceforth thou shalt catch men." Again, when a woman who was a notorious sinner fell at the feet of Jesus with tears, the Lord put aside all questioning as to the certainty of her salvation, and said "Go in peace," "Thy faith hath saved thee!" How becoming, then, for the poor sinner lying at the feet of Jesus to say, "I shall never perish," because the Lord says, "Fear not, I am The First and The Last. I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. 1:17, 18.)

How blessed it is thus to find God, against whom we so rebelled, reading such lessons of grace and peace to our souls! Surely, there is no room for doubts and fears in the presence of the God of peace, but everything to inspire us with the truest confidence and quietness. The blood-prinked mercy-seat, and merciful and faithful High Priest bear witness to this, and ever invite us to draw near to God.

'O love! thou bottomless abyss!

My sins are swallow'd up in thee;

Cover'd is my unrighteousness,

From condemnation now I'm free;

While Jesu's blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free boundless mercy, cries.
By faith I plunge me in this sea;
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
Hither, when hell assails, I flee,
And look unto my Saviour's breast;
Away, sad thought, and anxious fear,
Mercy is only written there!
Fix'd on this ground will I remain,
Though my heart fail, and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth's foundations melt away;
Mercy's full power I then shall prove;
Lov'd with an everlasting love.

No. 3, Abraham and Isaac

Gen. 22.

LOOKING at this scene in its typical character, there is much to call forth the profoundest feelings of humility, as well as the highest tone of praise. Prior to this, other scriptures had repeatedly shadowed forth the sufferings, blood-shedding, and death of the promised Seed; but in this chapter, we get strikingly portrayed our acceptance with God by the obedience of the Son. The father and the son “went both of them together” to the altar of burnt offering, to accomplish the purpose and counsel of God. Blessing followed the accepted offering.

Abraham had long waited for Isaac, the promised son, through whom God’s blessing was to be dispensed to “all families of the earth;” and his being called of God to “offer him for a burnt offering,” most plainly intimates, that these blessings could only be brought about by the death of Him, through whom the mercies of God were to flow. We find, therefore, that after Isaac had been laid upon the altar, the Lord said unto Abraham, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice” (vs. 18), that is, in offering up Isaac. It is the seeing that through death alone, blessing can flow from God to us, that so enhances to our souls the value of the cross of Christ, and at once defines the ground of all spiritual fellowship.

Isaac being the only son ■ “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac ■ forcibly reminds us, that God gave His only begotten Son, that we might live through Him, and is full of the deepest utterances of divine grace; especially when we couple with it the emphatic allusion to his being the beloved son ■ “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.” The type conveys to us the blessed intelligence, that not even feelings of the truest and most perfect affection between the Father and the Son, could stand as an obstacle to the carrying out the eternal purposes of grace. Not only was the Son always the Father’s delight, and rejoicing at all times in His bosom, but the Father also delighted most perfectly in all that He was, and in all that He did. At the time of our Lord’s baptism in Jordan, wherein He passed figuratively through death and resurrection, we find an intimation of the Father’s delight in this wondrous work, by a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17.) The beloved Son being offered on the altar of burnt offering, not only speaks to our souls of the fullness of unutterable love in giving us everlasting acceptance in the Beloved, but of the ineffable delight of the Father in that infinitely meritorious work.

How blessedly, also, the quiet and entire subjection of Isaac in carrying the wood for the burnt offering, and in being bound and laid upon the altar, with the knife and fire immediately before him, tells us of the Son of God; who set His face like a flint to do His Father’s will, who went forth bearing His own Cross, who hid not His face from shame and spitting, who “being in the form of God....took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:6-8.)

How very sweet to see the perfect unity of mind in the Father, and the Son: the Father sending, giving, and not sparing the Son, but delivering Him up for us all, and making us to be “accepted in the Beloved;” the Son humbling Himself, offering Himself, giving Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor; having no reserves, but, of His own voluntary will, freely and fully surrendering Himself to God, in the most willing and perfect obedience, in order to bring “many eons to glory.”

Perhaps nowhere, in the ancient Scriptures, do we find the cross of the Son of God so vividly brought to our view, as when “Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son (vs. 10); particularly when we connect with it the fact, that it was according to the counsel of Almighty God; just as on another occasion we find God addressed in connection with the death of Christ, that Herod, Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, were gathered together” to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.”(Acts 4:27, 28.) Other Scriptures speak of our Lord being taken by wicked hands, crucified and slain, and also of the unsearchable grace of the Lord in laying down His life, and taking it again; but here we have another view of the sufferings of our Lord on the cross. As I have said before, it is the Father and the Son together we see in this chapter—the beloved Son not spared, Jehovah of Hosts awaking His sword against His Shepherd, against the Man that is His Fellow; as Jesus said, “Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” (Ps. 22:15.) This is, to my own mind, a view of the very center and effulgence of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; here we read, in the liveliest possible characters, of the astounding workmanship of the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, and here we may drink abundantly of the unfathomable, ceaseless streams of eternal, changeless love.

The soul of Abraham was sustained and animated, in the scene we are considering, with thoughts of God’s love, in the fullness of its varied displays. “God,” said he, “will provide Himself a lamb.” He, also, “called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh (the Lord will provide); as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.” (vs. 14.) And, if the patriarch’s soul was led onward, by the Spirit of God, to the Lamb of God being slain on mount Calvary, he might well “rejoice” to see Christ’s day, and be “glad;” for, surely, no mountain ever witnessed to such an eternal spring of joy and gladness as Calvary; in no other mount was ever such a fountain of love and life opened, as when the beloved Son of God said, “It is finished, and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.” And, beloved, what did the ascending smoke from Moriah’s altar speak of, but of that eternal fragrance and savor of rest which God ever finds in that Lamb which He has provided, and which has been “seen” on mount Calvary by the eye of faith, to the joy and rejoicing of our souls? for God has been forever glorified, and our acceptance everlastingly secured in the Beloved.

It may be well to notice, that when Abraham offered Isaac for a burnt offering upon the altar, although God arrested the uplifted hand, yet the type was not allowed to stop short of death, as the only way of blessing from God; for when the angel called out of heaven, saying, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad,” a “ram caught in the thicket” was immediately presented to him, which he offered “in the stead of his son.” The compassion of God spares Abraham and Isaac the actual bitterness and agony of death, but the Son of God knew no escape. “He poured out His soul unto death;” He endured unutterable suffering unto death, even the death of the cross, that we might be “made righteous.”

The subsequent history of Isaac is still in keeping with all this typical instruction. It is very remarkable, that after we see Isaac bound, and laid upon the altar, we see him not again till he comes forth to meet his welcome Bride. (ch. 24:63, 67.) The whole of the intermediate history is one of buying and selling, sickness, death, mourning and bereavement; except that the father, by the instrumentality of the eldest servant in his house, is diligently and successfully employed in seeking a wife for his son. The testimony of the servant is, that the same Isaac which was laid upon the altar is now heir of all his father's honor and riches; and Rebecca's heart is so allured, that she leaves her house and kindred, and goes forth to meet the bridegroom.

This, beloved, is no cunningly devised fable. It is very plain to our souls. We know something of the comfort of the truth that the beloved SON has loved us, and given Himself for us. We also feel deeply that He is not here, that we are absent from the Lord, that the whole world lieth in the wicked one, that sin and death reign, that vanity and vexation of spirit, sickness and sorrow now abound. But our "blessed hope" is, that as surely as "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide," and met, and joyfully welcomed his beloved Rebecca, so will the Lord Jesus Himself, our glorious Bridegroom, descend from heaven, and we shall meet Him in the air, to share His glory in our Father's house, and be ever with and like Him. (1 Thess. 4:16, 17.)

But even now, we are not without consolation, however dark and solitary our path may sometimes appear; for as the servant of Abraham faithfully escorted the espoused virgin all through the desert road till she met her lord, and comforted and cheered her heart with assurances of the wealth and blessing, yea, covenant blessings connected with Isaac, how much more doth the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, minister consolation to our poor way worn hearts, and encourage us in our heavenward journey, by testifying to our souls of the death, triumph, eternal excellencies and glory of Him who loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! How sweetly did our Lord assure us, that the other Comforter should "abide with us forever," and how often doth His still small voice allure us with the thought, that, "Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry;" and that the same beloved Son that died upon the cross is "heir of all things," and having redeemed us, and made us joint-heirs with Himself, His fervent desire is that we may be with Him, and behold His glory.

Deliverance from the Law, and Liberty in Christ

THE Law made nothing perfect. It made righteous demands on those who had “nothing to pay;” it was, consequently, a ministration of “condemnation” and “death.” It burned the conscience, told the worshipper of his distance from God, and gave him no real relief. “By the Law is the knowledge of sin.” The Law cried justly and holily for vengeance, and opened no door of deliverance; for it is written, “The Law worketh wrath.” “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (See Deut. 27:26; 28:15; James 2:10.)

The giving of the Law was very significant of the direful consequences of God’s dealing with men after their works. The “blackness, and darkness, and tempest,” and sight so terrible, that “Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake,” showed that it brought no “glad tidings” to sinful man. It was full of alarm and terror, without any consolation, because it could not give life.

But the people, “ignorant of God’s righteousness,” and willing to establish their own righteousness, as we all naturally desire to do, unhesitatingly put themselves under the Law, as if they were competent to meet its righteous demands. The consequences were most disastrous. Moses the Law-giver never entered the land of promise, the people were cut off by the wrath of God, and a remnant only of those who came out of Egypt reached the land flowing with milk and honey.

Many, in the present day, forget that they are fallen creatures■without strength■and, like the children of Israel, place themselves under Law, ignorant of God’s solemn declaration, “By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight;” with such, therefore, there is no peace of conscience, no nearness of soul to God, no knowledge of the Father, and they experience either a self-condemned unhappy state of mind, or are overcome by self-complacent, soul-deceiving, pharisaic pride. The Apostle Paul tells us that, “As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse,” for being all breakers of the Law, all sinners, the Law can justly make this claim; for “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” (Gal. 3:10.) From this, Christ hath delivered us, by substitution, on the cross.

But the most remarkable thing is, that this spirit of self-righteousness should manifest itself in the Lord’s people; that regenerate souls, after having experimentally learned something of their having sinned, and come short of God’s standard, of their helplessness, and inability to come before God on the ground of the Law, and of their salvation by Christ, should place themselves again under a law, by turning the precepts and ordinances of the Scriptures into legal statutes, and obeying them, as an endeavor to make their salvation more secure, instead of rejoicing in full salvation by grace only, and as obedient children, in the blessed liberty and obligation of unchanging love, doing their Father’s will. This is an old device of the adversary; it robs souls of peace and fellowship with God, and always brings bondage, and leanness of soul, with despondency or pride. Though we have life in Christ, and are united to Him, and He to us, our position is one of entire dependence; for without Christ we can do nothing. We are kept by the power of God, through faith, and can only be happy in an atmosphere where grace reigns. The grace of God (not law), bringeth salvation; we are under grace, we stand in grace■the righteousness of God, by faith■not our own

righteousness. "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Christ has borne the full force of the curse of the Law, on the tree, for us; all its claims have been answered, all its power fully spent, all its charges fully met. Hence, we are delivered from the Law, because it is dead to us, and we have died (in Christ) to it. "Ye also, my brethren, are become dead to the Law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7:4.)

The Spirit of God never brings us into bondage to the Law. He testifies of Christ and all His fullness to our souls. He assures us of our sonship, and everlasting union with Christ, and, through Christ, gives us access to the Father. This is the power of all fruit bearing.

Perhaps there is nothing that the Lord's little ones have more to watch against than sliding away from the blessed liberty and freedom we have in Christ, and becoming entangled with a yoke of bondage. "We have not received again the spirit of bondage, again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." May we walk as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ!

One Thing

“One thing is needful” Luke 10:42.

“One thing have I desired.” Ps. 27:4.

“One thing I do.” Phil. 3:13.

WE see singleness of eye, in perfection, only in the Lord Jesus. He was at all times full of light, having no part dark. He did always those things that pleased the Father. Self-will never had a place in His heart; it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. He knew no sin. Rebellion was very far from His mind. He never “turned away back.” He gave His back to the miters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting. (Isa. 1.) The one object that pervaded the soul of Jesus was the Father’s glory. He was, emphatically, Jehovah’s “Righteous Servant,” “The Faithful Witness,” the “Beloved Son,” in whom the Father was well pleased. We never find that Christ was occupied in seeking anything for Himself. When His soul was sorely troubled, His one desire was, “Father, glorify Thy name.” (John 12) And when the bitterest of all sorrows was in immediate prospect, and the cup of unutterable anguish before Him, still it was “Not My will, but Thine, be done;” “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (Luke 22:42; John 18:11.) In singleness of heart too, the “one thing” with Jesus was, not seeking His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him; so that even the words that He spake were always for the glory of the Father ■ “The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me.... I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak.” (John 5:30; 14:24; 12:49.)

It is in the same path that the Spirit of God leads us. We are not our own, but bought with a price. Our members must be “instruments of righteousness unto God,” for we are His, redeemed by the blood of His beloved Son. We are liable to forget this, and, therefore, to live unto ourselves; but if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Much of our unhappiness and weakness arise from forgetting that we are redeemed, and also the cost of our redemption, hence double-mindedness, instability, seeking our own things, and being careful and troubled about many things, not considering that “one thing is needful.”

When the children of Israel were secure within the blood-sprinkled lintel and door-posts, there was “one thing” which was to occupy them, before their deliverance from Egypt actually came. They were to “eat” the flesh of the Lamb, “roast with fire,” with unleavened bread. Not that this would make their deliverance more certain, but this was the obedient and God-glorifying service they were called to. Their safety was in the sprinkled blood ■ “When I see the blood I will pass over you;” but they were to obey God in eating the roasted Lamb.

There is also “one thing” now set before us, it is to “glorify God” ■ “to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again.” Present temporal blessing is remarkably connected in the Scriptures with this spiritual path ■ “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6:33.) It is important to notice this. Our

temptation is to attempt to serve two masters, but this cannot be. We have often tried to please ourselves and to please God, but in such a course, the one or the other is despised. If we do not hate self-will, we shall despise God. To trifle on this point is the backsliding path, and is sure to bring darkness■great darkness■into our souls. “If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

To be “careful and troubled about many things,” is a sure indication that our hearts are not fully taken up with Christ. Hence the “one thing” needful for us, at all times, is to be in entire dependence on Him, sitting at His feet and hearing His word, having all our springs in Him. When this is the case, we shall know Him, not only as the Maker of all things, and Heir of all things, but also as the Upholder of all things, and that by Him all things consist; we shall, therefore, take all things that befall us, whether painful or pleasant, from His hands, learn in everything to give thanks, being assured that, while He works all things after the counsel of His own will, He also makes “all things work together for our good;” for He is the Head of all principality and power, having all power in heaven and in earth. How “needful” then is it that we should take our proper place before the Lord as receivers—helpless, ignorant, and unworthy, so as to learn of Him, wait upon Him, and glory in Him.

O let Thy grace inspire

My soul with strength divine;

Thy glory only to desire■

To live, to walk as Thine.

We may be well assured, that we are no losers by seeking the glory of God. He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Them that honor Him, He will be sure to honor. When the Lord proposed this question to Solomon, “Ask what I shall give thee?” he did not reply, long life, or riches, but he desired “one thing:” “Give Thy servant,” said he, “an understanding heart, to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad... And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself... behold, I have done according to thy word, and have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings lie unto thee all thy days.” (1 Kings 3:5-13.)

It is well also to notice what abundant honor and blessing God bestowed upon Elisha, after he also had chosen “one thing.” The prophet Elijah said unto him, “Ask what I shall do for thee,” and he replied, “Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” (2 Kings 2:9.) The sequel tells us the blessed result. May we be delivered from all the miserable influences of self, and seek honestly to live unto God!

The Psalmist desired “one thing” of the Lord, and that, said he, “will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” (Psa. 27:4.) This is blessed. There is no fruit of nature’s barren soil here. It surely is the breathing of the Holy Spirit in the soul, and had its full utterance in the heart of Jesus. But it is written for our learning, and we may well ponder the lesson. It seems with the deepest emotions of

affection; we may say, it is one of the finest specimens of “singleness of heart.” And, beloved, do not our souls sympathize with the desire for this “one thing,” this thirst for fellowship and joy in the Lord? Or, are the things of earth so earnestly sought after by us, as to hinder our saying, “One thing have I desired of the Lord?” The Apostle Paul wept over those who were minding earthly things in his day, and spoke of them as “enemies of the cross of Christ.” Surely, “the beauty of the Lord” is above all created excellence, whether visible or invisible; it is both unchangeable and eternal; and the soul anticipates no higher delight than “seeing Him as He is:” it is the consummation of the saint’s desire, and also of the desire of Christ concerning us. “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.” (John 17:24.) The fervent utterance of the heart of Paul was, “that I may know Him;” and so the souls of those who have beheld “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” who know their standing in grace, and have proved the vanity of the world and themselves, find that the one object of their desire and affection is CHRIST HIMSELF. They search the sacred oracles, and thirst for closer, happier, deeper fellowship with Him of whom they testify. This “one thing” they seek after, never being weary of considering the “beauty of the Lord,” never aspiring to a higher position than that of enquirers and learners at His feet. The more believers learn of Jesus, the more earnestly they “follow on” to know Him. They find increasingly, that His flesh is bread to strengthen, and His blood wine to cheer; and the droppings of the anointing of the true Aaron coming down to the skirts of His garments, they find to be the oil that makes their face to shine. (Ps. 104:15.) They call upon all that is within them to bless His holy name, and feel, if they had ten thousand crowns, they would count it their highest honor to cast them all at His feet. If our souls are not desiring and seeking after this “one thing,” it is because we have forgotten Him who did, by Himself, purge our sins.

The Apostle Paul, when writing to the saints at Philippi, felt his heart so fired with the love of God in Christ, that he tells us that the “one thing” prevailing in his soul, was to hasten onward to the possession of the promised glory. “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13, 14.) He had experimentally proved while feeling “less than the least of all saints,” that he possessed in Christ an all-sufficiency of strength and wisdom to glorify God. He had also so experienced the vanity of things here, and the inestimable value and preciousness of Christ, as to “desire to depart, and to be with Him.” To be with Christ in resurrection life, was the “one thing” on which his heart was set; for this he fervently longed, and his soul earnestly pressed onward to this fullness of joy.

Had we, beloved, more perfect knowledge of Christ, and the power of His resurrection, there would be more of this energy of life, and intensity of love, working in our hearts. The Divine assurance, that there is the most “perfect peace” between God and our own souls, that we are in Christ, that He who went down into death, under the full weight of God’s wrath for our sins, is alive again, and exalted “far above all heavens,” that “our life is hid with Christ in God,” that “as He is, so are we in this world,” that “we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,” so “joined to the Lord,” that nothing can possibly separate us from the love of God, will alone enable us to count all things but loss for Christ, to forget the things that are behind, and to find one thing animating our hearts. The enjoyment of our standing “complete in Him,” practically separates us unto God.

HEART-TROUBLE. ■When our Lord said to Peter, “Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1), He did not mean, do not be troubled about your sin of denying Me with oaths and curses, but do not be troubled about your salvation; for “ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” He knew that Peter would be troubled about his sin, and it was well that he should be; for we afterward see that “the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.” (Luke 22:61, 62.) May we know much of heart-trouble and weeping before the Lord over our sins and failures as disciples, while we experience the reality of His everlasting salvation of our souls!

A Practically Good Conscience

WE should mortify every natural inclination which, though lawful in itself, we, in our own souls, are conscious would, if indulged by ourselves, deaden that susceptibility of soul, and blunt the edge of conscience, which it is so important, so essentially necessary, to keep alive and keen, if we would be happy and strong. We have no communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit, but in the new man, through the blood of Jesus. If the flesh in the saint be unmortified, all joy, all sensible peace, are gone, because the Spirit being grieved, His testimony in the conscience to the prevailing efficacy, the peace-establishing virtue of the blood, is silent; and His presence will only be known as the Convincer of sin, till, confession being made, peace is again restored. The conscience of the saint can only be restored, after sin, by a fresh application of the blood thereto, i.e., by looking again to Jesus. Jesus, in the grace of His heart, the preciousness of Himself, the virtue of His blood, is in the conscience by faith for present peace, and power in service, or, sin is there for sorrow, shame, and weakness. There is no middle path for the saint as pertaining to the conscience. His standing in Christ risen remains the same at all times, under all circumstances. This is a fact to hold fast, but it is a fact only known in the joy of it, as we walk confidently with God, and, in the power of the Spirit, are mortifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. The conscience, however, being purged by the blood of Jesus, and so made a good conscience, must be regulated by the Word, otherwise we may be disobeying Christ, while we think to do Him service.

Ex. 15:23

THE song of triumph, “which Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord,” is speedily followed by murmurings from the same lips. Three days wandering in the wilderness, and finding no water, was sufficient to obliterate from the thoughts of Israel what God had wrought. When they did come to water, “they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?” The same people who had sung the song of triumph with Moses, now murmur against Moses. The Lord Himself, not Moses, was the theme of their song; and in the Lord’s estimate the murmuring was against the Lord, and not against Moses. “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured.” It is well to attend to this “admonition.” We are ever ready to lay the fault on others, when it goes ill with us; but it is really against the Lord Himself that we complain. “His hand is not shortened,” His grace is not exhausted, His ear is not heavy. This Moses knew, and he turned the murmuring against himself into a cry unto the Lord. Moses might have met their complaining of him, by complaining against them; but he reckoned on God’s grace and power. He had before known the petulance of the people, when they stood on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. He had stilled their fears, and cried unto the Lord. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;” and the Lord “led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness...to make Himself a glorious name.” Again the Lord hears the cry of Moses in answer to the murmurings of Israel; and the Lord showed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet; and the Lord added to His name, so glorious already, that of Healer ■ “I am the Lord that healeth thee.” It was the bitter waters of Marah which brought out this gracious name of God. Had Israel at once entered on Canaan, “a land of hills and valleys which drinketh water of the rain of heaven,” they would not have been in circumstances to learn this new and gracious name of God. It is God, who knew the bitterness of the waters, who alone knew the tree to sweeten them. And may we not say, that God is able to make all the experience of the wilderness not only profitable, but also that out of which the truest comfort is to be extracted. The “ordinance” of the sweetening the bitter waters is written for our admonition.

It is no uncommon thing to find the fresh joy of recent conversion succeeded by murmuring. There is something so wonderful in having peace with God, and deliverance from bondage through fear of death, as necessarily to call forth grateful emotions. But then, it is often the sense of these things, rather than the groundwork of our deliverance, that gives us joy, and allowable joy, although there be the danger of resting in the blessing received, rather than in the Blesser. Israel went through the Red Sea as on dry land; but it was the arm of the Lord that divided the sea for them, and gave them a dry and safe path through the divided waters. They might well think of that memorable passage, but in so doing, they might forget, and did forget the arm of the Lord; and therefore the next difficulty in their way led them to murmuring. But Moses remembered the arm of the Lord, and found its intervention quite as manifest in healing the bitter waters as in dividing the Red Sea. Now the arm of the Lord revealed to us is the Cross of Christ. Christ crucified is to us who are saved, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. It is upon the ground of what God has

wrought in the Cross of Christ, that we are redeemed to Himself, and delivered out of this present evil world; but although sung with truth unto the Lord, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation;" yet, actually, though they were out of Egypt, they were not in Canaan; though all needed power was present to bring them there, and they only needed faith in that power to enter in; but actually they were in the wilderness. Even so we can give thanks unto the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. In that kingdom we are in spirit, and in rich blessing, and in Christ we are already made to sit down in heavenly places, and fully blessed; but actually we are in the world, though not of it; and the very standing which God has given to us in Christ, makes us to know experimentally what the world is, what the flesh is, what Satan is. The new convert, with a light heart and firm step, it may be, goes his three days' journey in the wilderness, and finds no water, or else, finding water, he cannot drink of it, because it is bitter. When laboring under the burden of a guilty conscience, deliverance from such a burden is the one desire of the soul; but when that deliverance is effected through faith in the blood of the Lamb, and peace with God known instead of a guilty conscience, the trial which before arose from unbelief, is now exchanged for another order of trial, the trial which begins from realized redemption, the trial of faith. Can we trust the same Christ to meet us in every difficulty by the way, on whom we have trusted for our acceptance with God? Could Israel trust the same arm of the Lord to sweeten the bitter waters, which had divided for them the Red Sea? A very short journey along the narrow path which leadeth unto life brings us to Marah. The unsatisfying of the creature has to be learnt—this proves one range of painful experience. We cannot stand as it were in a negative position; if we have left, on the principle of obedience, the flesh-pots of Egypt, we shall yet hanker after them, unless our hearts delight themselves in the good things of Canaan. This lesson is also one of painful experience. Then also there are expectations formed, short of having our expectation from God only; these expectations must necessarily be disappointed for our real blessing and joy. Whatever may be our "Marah," it generally brings out from us murmuring and complaining against persons or things; and this is always the case when we taste the bitter waters, and compare our present with our past condition, instead of looking up to God, who is higher than the things which are pressing us down.

We are brought to Marah, it may be, we murmur; and as murmurings only increase the bitterness of the waters, we cry unto the Lord, and He shows us the tree which immediately sweetens them. There is a tree, and One who hung on it, under the curse of God, when on that tree He bore our sins in His own body. This is God's "ordinance" to us for sweetening the bitter waters. It is the doctrine of the Cross. We have learned its grandest lesson, as being the groundwork of our reconciliation with God, for "God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It is indeed "Marah" to us, when we begin to discover that sin dwelleth in us. In most cases, it is the sense of guilt, arising from positive transgressions of God's commandments, which affects us at first, and leads us to the Cross as our only refuge; but how is the bitterness, arising from the discovery that, fearful as was the discovery of rebellion against God, and alienation of heart from God, it is nothing compared with the fearfulness of the discovery, that sin and death are our natural constitution, to be met? even by the Cross of Christ. Cast this tree into the waters and they are sweetened. It is not only that your sins have been borne by Christ, but that you yourself have in God's judgment been crucified with Him. "I am," says the Apostle, "crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live." "Our old man is crucified with Him." How are

the bitter waters sweetened! How much deeper does the love of God appear, how much broader the work of Christ, how much more solid the ground on which we stand, when we can dare to see all that we are, as well as to consider all that we have done; and see all judged in the Cross!

An onward journey in the wilderness may bring us to “waters that fail.” (Jer. 15:11.) This is another Marsh. Have we learned how to correct disappointment in our expectation from ourselves? we need to learn the same with respect to others. We expect from them that which we do not find in ourselves, and we murmur; but when the cry comes unto the Lord, again the tree sweetens the bitter waters, or makes those that “failed” us to be the occasion of leading us to the living fountain of waters. It is still Jesus Christ and Him crucified; but now known not only in what He has done, but in what He Himself is, as never disappointing our expectation from Him. “I am,” says He, “the Bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”

Or our Marah has been found in another direction. We have thought to do the impossibility of serving God and mammon—Christ and the world. We set aside the experience of others, and almost the testimony of the Lord Himself, and will needs hazard the experiment. Sure of our value of Christ, and of our real desire to benefit others, we fondly hold to the thought, that the world of our day is hardly the world of past history; that there are so many recognized ameliorating influences at work in the world, that we would fain help them on. But it is not long ere we are brought to a point; either the conscience is to be maintained in its allegiance to God, or surrendered to the world. The world, in seeking its own, cannot afford room for exercise of conscience towards God. No association with the world can be based on such a principle. The world ignores God’s right to be heard and obeyed in its matters. Its friendship is enmity with God. Again we murmur. Why is it so? The cry, and again the same tree heals these bitter waters; the glory of the Cross is discovered, in not only separating us from a world under righteous doom, but as introducing us into “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us;” and we learn to glory in the Cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world.

The experience of the children of God in itself is for the most part substantially the same, because it is the result of that which God has made them to be in Christ; but the sweetening of these experiences in God’s appointed way, by the use of His “ordinance,” Jesus Christ and Him crucified, makes all the difference of the waters in their bitterness occasioning murmuring, or the casting in of the tree which God has pointed out, causing praise and thanksgiving; so that the next stage in the journey through the wilderness is the shade of the palm trees, and refreshment of the wells of Elim. (Ex. 15:27.)

Israel sang triumphantly and then murmured, and by virtue of the tree cast into the waters were refreshed, and learned Jehovah as their Healer. Jeremiah triumphed, too, in the Lord. “But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible One, therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed, for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten. But, O Lord of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see Thy vengeance on them: for unto Thee have I opened my cause. Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord: for He had delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.” (Jer. 20:11-13.) But this song of praise is not sustained. The waters were bitter indeed unto the prophet,

all his familiars watching for his halting. Speedily he turns from God's deliverance to his actual circumstances, and curses the day wherein he was born. (vs. 14.) He cried not unto the Lord, and found no tree to sweeten the bitter waters. Such will be the case, when our deceived heart would feed upon the ashes of our own experience, instead of the flesh and blood of Christ.

The disciple of Christ has full taste of all the bitterness which belongs to man, and he tastes also of bitter waters that others know not (see Psa. 73); but he has been taught the secret of how to sweeten these bitter waters, by bringing in Christ and Him crucified in the various aspects in which God presents Him to our faith, and finds his strange character written by the apostle, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

John 20:10-21

THE last public act of Christ was on the Cross. The world has never seen Him since He rose from the dead. But though the world may say, "The Lord seeth us not," "Who is lord over us?" Jesus has not finished with the world. He will come again. This will be His next public act "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (Rev. 1:7.) The last universal cry of the world, in reference to Christ, was, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" The next general exclamation will be, "Rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. 6:16.) When Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, all enemies must be put under His feet; all those who have not obeyed the gospel, will be punished with everlasting destruction. When Jesus died upon the cross, the meek and lowly Lamb put away sin; but when the world again beholds Him, it will be said, "The great day of the wrath of the Lamb is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

It is between these two public acts of Jesus, that the gospel of peace is now preached. Accordingly, we find the Lord, after His resurrection from the dead, ministering the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace to His own disciples, and commanding them to go forth and preach it to others. So full of grace is this blessed gospel, that it was to be published first at Jerusalem; the very murderers of Christ were first to hear that Christ had so made peace, that God was now able and willing to forgive the vilest sinner through the atoning efficacy of the death of Jesus. This is grace. How marvelously condescending is the grace God! it comes down to us when sinners, and without strength. How abundant in mercy! it proclaims pardon and peace to the most unworthy. How full! it brings salvation. How free! whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life. It brings all that the heavy-laden sinner needs, and far more than he can ask or think. It is peace by Jesus Christ.

As I have said, we see this grace in the ministry of Christ to His disciples, after He rose from the dead. They had forsaken Him when He was in the deepest distress, they were full of fear, ignorance, and unbelief, and were shut in for fear of the Jews. But the gracious Lord appears in their midst with the wonderful salutation of "PEACE." This is what they needed though they had not merited it, and the Lord of peace can give freely to the poor and needy. Their necessity is met by His compassion. The fountain overflows, and the thirsty drink. He said, "Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side." (John 20:19, 20.)

We may here notice, that peace with God is based, first, upon the word of God: "He saith unto them;" and, secondly, on the work of Christ: "He showed unto them His hands and His side." No soul has deliverance from the guilt of sin, but by the word of God. The burdened heart always wants God's authority. The convicted conscience knows its account of sin is with God, and will be satisfied with nothing less than His discharge. All the opinions of men, even the best of men, cannot come in between God and the soul to relieve the burden of sin. "Let God be true, and every man a liar," is the language of the heart that feels the searching light and holiness of God. The

word that Christ spoke to His poor, timid, wayward disciples, was “Peace be unto you.” So now, God, by His word and Spirit, declares that every believer in Jesus has forgiveness of sins; that, by Christ, he is justified from all things; so that the feeble-minded believer need not have another fear or trouble about his sins, for the word of God assures him that they are all forgiven.

But when there is an ear thus to hear the word of God, and to receive the law from His mouth, the soul will be led onward with wisdom and spiritual understanding in the knowledge of Christ; and thus have Divine intelligence as to how and why he has been brought into this blessed standing of peace with God. As Christ showed unto His disciples His hands and His side, so God reveals to us by His Spirit, that the same Jesus, which was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, is alive again for evermore, having borne and put away all our sins, and overcome death and Satan; and that Christ risen from the dead, the Conqueror of all our enemies, is the Object of faith as well as the sole Source of peace. The blessed Lord did not direct them to look at their ways, or frames, or attainments, for peace; but He directed them to Himself; He expounded to them the Scriptures concerning Himself; He showed them His hands and His side; He drew their minds away from themselves and their cares, and presented His own wounded aide; He commended to them the fact that His own heart’s blood had been shed, that He had poured out His soul unto death to save sinners, that by His stripes they are healed, that He Himself being the fountain open for sin and uncleanness, He could take away all their fears, even as He had put away all their sins.

This is very blessed. It is most truly the way of faith, which always gives glory to God. There is an Object for the heart’s affections, connected with such unchanging and eternal blessing, as may well engage its utmost capacities. And the Lord would have it be so, for He ministers this vast blessing with the most fervent and repeated personal assurance. He twice says, “Peace be unto you.” This is very important, for many true believers in Jesus, not seeing the freeness of the grace of God, are greatly troubled on this point; they say that they see clearly that others are forgiven, but the question with them is, Am I forgiven? Am I accepted? Is all this eternal glory for me? But when the blessed Comforter enables them to grasp the free grace that God so repeatedly proclaims for the strong consolation of His people, in the exceeding great and precious promises of His word, they exchange their doubts and fears for quietness and assurance. “By Christ, all that believe are justified from all things.” “Whosoever believeth in Him shall have remission of sins.” Christ proclaims peace to every soul that comes to Him. He saves to the uttermost, “them that come unto God by Him.” It is terrible unbelief for a soul that has taken refuge in the sacrifice of Christ—that comes to God by Him—to hesitate to say, I am forgiven, I am justified; and it should be confessed to God as sin. It arises either from the soul being clouded through careless walk, or from not looking simply to Christ, and reading the deep lessons of Divine love in the Lord’s death; for

‘In Him we meet a Saviour-God,

And fear and terror cease.’

Looking unto Jesus, remembering His death for us when we were sinners, is the only way to be happy. The Comforter ministers Christ, for Christ is the Fullness of comfort. It is vain to look for it elsewhere; but His springs of consolation never dry. The disciples were full of fear before they saw the Peacemaker, and heard the word of peace from His mouth “Then were the disciples glad,

when they saw the Lord." The Apostle speaks of Moses seeing Him who is invisible, and says, "We see Jesus." This is, of course, by faith. All who are taught of God know something of it. Some struggle hard to be happy in self, in circumstances, service, &c. It is the natural element of fallen man, but saints prove bitterly that it is like building upon the sand. It is impossible we can be happy without seeing Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth, and knowing that all His fullness is ours. Jesus wished His disciples to be happy, and He knew that this could only be, by looking to Himself, so He showed them His hands and His side, and it was this that made them glad. Like the prophet, each one of them was ready to sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Is. 61:10.) O how happy and joyful should we be, could we only, with the eye of faith, look more steadily at the fullness of Divine love and peace, in the death and triumph of Christ!

But further. Believers are servants, because they are sons; being friends, through the reconciling power of the death of Jesus, they may know the deep things of God; being cleansed by His blood, the Holy Spirit comes down and dwells in their hearts; being happy in God's presence, they may now, in the liberty of children, serve. This is the Divine order. Men think that they must serve, in order to have peace, but the thought is from the father of lies, and cannot be too strongly repudiated. "Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." The order of service here is, that it follows peace; the character of service is obedience. Many plead for no higher standard of action than usefulness, but that was not the principle that guided the heart of Jesus. It is impossible to be really faithful to God, without being useful to others, but the reverse does not, hold good. There is often much self-will, and pride, in carrying out useful objects. "To obey is better than sacrifice," is God's principle, and Jesus is the perfect example of it. He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him; and, in like manner, Jesus sends us to do His will in an evil world, in the blessed consciousness, that, however rugged our path may be, we have peace in Him, and should cheerfully suffer for His sake, who so willingly laid down His life for us.

Haggai. 1:5, 7

ONCE and again did the Lord of Hosts, by the prophet Haggai, sound these solemn words in the ears of His ancient people. They had in heart turned away from the God of Israel. Still calling themselves by the name of the Lord's people, they justified their neglect of His house, by saying, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Self and its many interests had absorbed their minds, as their ceiled houses plainly witnessed. Corn, oil, cattle, wine, earning money, and laying it up, were eagerly sought after, while at the same time the Lord's house was lying waste.

This condition of things called for God's discipline; their expectations in earthly things proved abortive. The prophet was commanded to say unto them, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes...Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands." (chs. 1:5-11.) Thus we see that God taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and, that when He is provoked to jealousy, how much stronger He is than His provokers. He shows His people that He is thoroughly acquainted with everything that their hearts are set upon, and that He teaches the difficult lessons, that "God is greater than man," and that to attempt to occupy a position of independence of Him is madness and folly, and sure to end in failure and disappointment.

But the Lord not only rebukes His people, He also exhorts and encourages them; He assures them of the blessing connected with obeying Him: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." (vs. 8.) This was very gracious, and the sequel shows how ready the Lord was to come in to help and bless His people, when they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and did fear before the Lord. He sent the prophet to them, saying, "I am with you, saith the Lord." He stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, and the spirit of Joshua, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did the work in the house of the Lord of Hosts their God. After this, the prophet was sent again to cheer and encourage His people, saying, "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts.... My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." (chs. 2:4, 5.)

We also find, that as soon as the people had a heart to serve the Lord according to His mind, from that time the blessing of God was with them. "Consider now from this day.... even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it.... from this day will I bless you." (chs.

2:18, 19.)

Is there not much in this history, beloved, that we may apply to ourselves? Is it not to be feared, that many of the Lord's people are wont to excuse their anxiety for success in temporal matters, or for maintaining a certain standing in society, and their lack of energy in the service of Christ, by saying, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built?" May not many cases of sorrow and distress be considered the Lord's rebuke and chastisement for seeking our own things, and not the things of Christ? God surely has a work to be done now. His church His house is ever dear to Him. He beholds the present scene of division, confusion, and dishonor to Christ, and He commands us to build "Edify one another," "Exhort one another daily," "Consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works." Many who have not carefully weighed these scriptures, may be tempted to think, that building the Lord's house in our day, is the work only of a few that are specially gifted; but, "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." It was not only the spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua that God stirred up to work, but all the remnant of the people. This is very important. Each member of the body of Christ has his measure of grace and service. All are needed. Every believer should solemnly feel this before the Lord. Let none expect the blessing of God, either personally or on their work, if the welfare of the house of the Lord is only of secondary importance. Each saint should be much in self-judgment and prayer to God. "Consider your ways," is assuredly a word for the times. We should all seek to stir up one another to turn to God with purpose of heart, to seek first the kingdom of God, and to cry earnestly, continually, and believingly, to the Father of mercies, for reviving in these last days. Our estate is a very low one, but there is help in God. The Lord's house lieth waste, and we must build. We may well count upon God. He changeth not. He will hear our prayers, and answer them for Jesus' sake. Let us try our hearts and all our ways by the Scriptures. We need not hesitate, for God can meet us at the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. Let us be earnest, honest, and of good courage, holding fast the authority of the Written Word of God, and presence and power of His Spirit. Let us individually and collectively consider our ways, and build the Lord's house. Christ pleased not Himself.

How precious the Church is to Christ! He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. What love! The preaching of the gospel, too, is precious to Him. When souls are converted, it is like hewing out costly stones from the quarry for the house of the Lord; but even if the report be not believed, He can take ineffable delight in it. "We are," says Paul, "unto God, a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." (2 Cor. 2:15.)

Beloved brethren, we are called unto the fellowship of the Son of God. We are in partnership with Jesus in everything. All therefore that concerns Him should deeply interest us. Being joined unto the Lord and one spirit, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, we should never cherish objects and interests apart from Him. Time was, when the simple and true-hearted fishermen could leave their nets and follow Jesus. They felt His claim upon them more than even the necessary details of this present life; not that they were unwilling to cast a hook into the sea, and take up a fish, but it must be at the Lord's bidding.

It is a deeply important matter that every believer should take heed to himself, and seek his own soul's comfort and blessing; but it is a terrible thing to stop there. The heart of the Lord is upon His whole church; He intercedes for all saints; and fellowship with Him would lead us into the same

path. It is also clearly the mind of God, that saints should labor with their hands in the thing that is good, to live honest toward them that are without, and to owe no man anything; but it would be a sad thing to stop there. True fellowship with the Lord would aim higher than this; it would lead us to labor also, that we might have to give to him that needeth to build His house.

When the Lord comes, beloved, we shall not regret that we have lived for the glory of God. We know not how soon He may come again. Let us be found, when He appears, building His house. We have much to praise Him for now, but,

‘When we appear in yonder cloud,

With all His favor’d throng;

Then will we sing more sweet, more loud,

And Christ shall be our song.’

Isa. 40:8

THE earliest testimony in Scripture to the character of “flesh,” is from God Himself before the Flood. “And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” (Gen. 6:3.) Thus early was announced that truth, which the subsequent dispensations of God have so remarkably corroborated, that whether God addresses the understanding or conscience of man, his fears, or his affections, striving to bring him back unto Himself, from whom he has revolted, it is all useless. He is “flesh,” and flesh is antagonistic to God. This God announced, and on this ground doomed it to judgment, after a respite of an hundred and twenty years.

At the close of this period of the longsuffering of God, the judgment is executed on all flesh, with the exception of a spared remnant of eight persons. A new era commences; but is “flesh” altered in its relation to God? is it improved by judgment? No; all flesh speedily falls into idolatry; but in the patience and longsuffering of God, instead of bringing another judgment upon the world of the ungodly, He calls out one person “alone” (Isa. 51:2), and blesses him, revealing Himself to him as “God Almighty,” and making him the depository of most gracious promises. In process of time, it pleased God to make the posterity of Abraham a nation peculiar to Himself, for the special purpose of maintaining the truth amidst “the gods many, and lords many,” that Jehovah their God was the one only true God. In order to this, God Himself had delivered them out of Egyptian bondage, cast out the nations of Canaan before them, and gave them laws for their government, and ordinances of worship, that the blessedness of the people which had Jehovah for their God might be made manifest to all other nations. But this highly favored nation, after but a brief possession of the land of Canaan, instead of faithfully witnessing to the One Jehovah, copied the manners and worship of the nations whom God had cast out before them, and fell into idolatry. Many indeed were the strivings of God with them to reclaim them; the severity of servitude, the mercy of deliverance, their own experience that it went well with them when they served Jehovah, and brought misery on themselves when they departed from Him. But all these things failed to win this highly favored portion of man to God. He was flesh, and every fresh striving of God with him, only tended to bring more strongly out that flesh was incorrigible. This was remarkably shown by “the ministry of the prophets,” whom God raised up from time to time. “But they mocked the messengers 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. Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man, or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age; He gave them all into his hand.” (2 Chron. 36:16, 17.) The prophetic ministry brought out from “the ungodly nation” a remnant, which feared the Lord, and received His gracious promises. The prophets were as “God’s month,” to “take forth the precious from the vile,” and to lead those who were separated unto God by their ministry, to put no confidence in themselves, but to trust in the living God.” “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” (Jer. 17:5.)

The prophet Isaiah testifies against the nation of Israel, but comforts an elect remnant, the "little one that becomes a thousand, and the small one that becomes a strong nation." "The Book of the Prophet Isaiah may be divided into three parts. First, chapters 1-35; then, what may be called the historical episode, 36-39; and then, the truly evangelical strain, 40 to the end. In the first division, how have our hearts delighted to linger over the blessed strain of the birth and acting's of Immanuel comprised in chap. 7-12. Then there is the doom of Babylon, and of sundry nations, interspersed with the deliverance and joy of the oppressed remnant, till we come to the glowing strain of millennial blessedness. (ch. 35) What a triumphant close! But we are turned to other things, and learn the evil height of rebellion and blasphemy, to which "flesh" has reached in the person of Sennacherib. In him we have flesh unrestrained, showing its willful "rage" against God and His people; taking the proud place of an equal with God, instead of the place of a creature entirely dependent on His will. The righteous judgment of God falls upon him and his followers, in their full rampancy of rebellion against God-true picture of the yet future manifestation of unbridled flesh in the Beast and his armies, met with direct judgment by the wrath of the Lamb. (Isa. 36, 37; Rev. 19) "The flesh" in the saint is restrained, but is it therefore better in itself? Let the restraint be removed, and the flesh in the saint instantly shows itself in exaltation against God. This is plainly manifested in the history of Hezekiah, recorded Isaiah 38, 39. "Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that A. might know all that was in his heart." (2 Chron. 32:31.)

It is after this manifestation of the evil of the flesh in the open rebel and in the saint, that the prophet commences that most blessed strain, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people." But what is the ground of the comfort? it is that God is acting in the richest grace, after the evil of the flesh has been fully demonstrated. It is not now as He had announced before the flood, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is flesh," but, after respite, judgment. This still holds true. But on the ground of what "flesh" is, and has been proved to be, God now announces the most solid comfort. Let the "cry" go forth to the ends of the earth, "All flesh is grass." It is no longer a question to be proved, but one already settled, and to be received as an axiom. The prophet raises the cry, in connection with the revelation of the glory of the Lord. Let that shine forth, and "flesh" must needs wither up before it. And the cry itself, "All flesh is grass," is contrasted with "The word of our God shall stand forever." "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever." (Isa. 40:6-8.)

John the Baptist identifies himself with this "voice," and makes "the cry" his own. If he be sent before the Lord to prepare His way, his "cry" is, "All flesh is grass." Flesh must not show itself. It cannot stand in the presence of the Lord. Religious flesh, Scribes and Pharisees, must flee from the wrath to come. The language of the Evangelist differs from that of the Prophet in one particular. In Isaiah it is written, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." In the Evangelist, "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." His glory is His salvation, blessed be His name; that glory which, on its manifestation, shall blow upon all flesh, is now testified to by the word of God as His salvation, to all who truly acknowledge the utter worthlessness of the flesh. John specially went "before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins." (Luke 1:76, 77.) But

the same John who cried, "All flesh is grass," had another "cry" of the most opposite character. "John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake. He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me." And when John sees Jesus coming unto him, he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He, of whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me; for He was before me." He is not grass. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." And He is declared to be this in His person and His work, that there might be solid comfort in Him, and from Him, to those who know that "All flesh is grass." It is upon this ground that salvation is of grace through faith in Jesus, the Son of God and Lamb of God. It is indeed "an hard saying," "who can hear it?" that "All flesh is grass." And a large portion of the trials of saints arises from disappointed expectations of the flesh, either in themselves, or in others. It was "a hard saying" for the disciples to hear Jesus presenting Himself to them as "living bread," "meat," and "drink," with the solemn declaration, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53.) They had not then realized that "All flesh is grass." Its thoughts, judgments, feelings, alike fretted against the doctrine of the cross, as thus propounded by the Lord. But the Lord closes this wonderful discourse concerning His own person and His work on the cross by confirming the cry of the Prophet and of the Baptist as to what "flesh" really is. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63.) The true doctrine of the cross, and the profit lessness of the flesh must stand together if the flesh, intellectually, morally, or religiously, "profiteth" in bringing man unto God, "then Christ has died in vain." If the flesh profiteth to the understanding the things of God, then is there no need that a man should be born again. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." How much inward conflict there is, in "casting down reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" let each saint answer for himself. It is indeed a hard saying, that "the flesh profiteth nothing;" but what deliverance, what peace, what comfort, pervade the soul, when all expectation from the flesh is given up, and we learn to glory only in the Lord.

The apostle Peter takes up the cry of the prophet, confirming it, and connecting his own testimony with it, blessedly enlarging the scope of the declaration, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever." "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Pet. 1:22, 28.) If the prophet testified, "the word of our God shall stand forever;" the apostle adds, "it liveth and abideth forever." There was life in the word, when conveyed to the heart by the Spirit, and that word was by the gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It was not only the word of God in its enduringness set in strong contrast with flesh in its transitoriness, but it is Jesus in the glory of His person, in His cross, in His resurrection, in His ascension into heaven, "angels, and principalities, and powers, being made subject unto Him," who is in the gospel set in strong contrast with all that man is or can be. He abideth forever, and whatever man covets, whether righteousness, wisdom, or strength, or even life, is only found abidingly in Him.

But although the preaching of the gospel proceeds forth from God to man on the ground that "All flesh is grass," it finds men, in their individual thoughts, and in their associations together, still trying to contradict the axiom, that "All flesh is grass." The very "goodness of God," as proclaimed in the gospel, is taken occasion of by man, as an opportunity for exalting himself. And if the confession be extorted from man, by the stern fact of the uncertainty of life, that a man is a poor frail being—in a word, that he is "grass"—still "the glory of man" is regarded by him as something more permanent than himself. But what says our oracle? "All the glory of man is as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." The glory of man, on which he prides himself as that which survives him, is here presented as even more perishable than grass. When the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be actually revealed, then will all human glory not only be obscured, but also will be righteously judged by God, as being set up in opposition to Christ." How can ye believe, says Jesus, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" There is no abidingness in human glory, it is "as the flower of the field;" but the glory of Christ in the salvation of a sinner abideth forever. That which the word preached by the gospel now testifies unto, the day of the Lord will clearly manifest. (Isa. 2:17.)

There are many restraints on the flesh now; for example, civil government, and the preaching of the gospel. Civil government is hardly regarded as an ordinance of God, but rather as an institution for the convenience of man. Neither is the preaching of the gospel regarded as God's grand ordinance, but it is rather superseded by an extended profession of the Christian religion, which has not sprung from the gospel at all. The effort of man is to throw off every restraint. "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" is virtually the language of the day. But what if God should again no longer "strive with man!" what if He allow the restraints of government to be relaxed according to man's willfulness! what if the testimony to the gospel of His grace be closed! what if God Himself, restraining man's willfulness by so many secret means, should, in righteous judgment, send on man a strong delusion to believe a lie! It is to this that man is now tending. "The wicked or lawless one" shall be revealed, and the full energy of "the flesh" will then be displayed in blasphemy against God and His Christ, to be met with direct judgment from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

What a safeguard therefore is it to know that "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass"—that judgment is its necessary doom, for the flesh, and "the minding the things of the flesh," is enmity against God—that the gospel preached is the judgment of the flesh already in the cross of Christ. "Our old man is crucified with Him." And whosoever acquiesces in that judgment passed by God there, shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. He becomes "armed with the same mind," gives up all expectation from the flesh, because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. And to him the cry, that "All flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of the grass," is the basis of the most solid comfort, because he is led to expect nothing from it, but his expectation is from the Lord. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. 2:13, 14.)

What Think Ye of Christ?

I THINK He is the Son of God;
I think He's washed me in His blood;
I think that I one day shall stand
Among the blest at His right hand.
I think He is th' eternal God,
Who formed all things by His word;
I think He's full of truth and grace;
The Father's image in His face.
I love to think on Jesu's name,
Who through all ages is the same;
And though I'm poor, He thinks on me,
And soon His glory I shall see.
With thoughts of good He thinks on those
Whom God the Father in Him chose;
He suffer'd in His people's stead,
And rose to be their living Head.
His heart with love to us does burn,
And soon, I think, He will return,
And take us all with Him above,
The children of the Father's love.

Psa. 22

IT is in the cross of Christ that we behold the manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. We there read the deep mysteries of divine grace. Each detail of the sufferings of the Lamb of God opens to our souls a fresh stream of the fullness of that mercy which endureth forever. The sufferings and glory of the Lamb are the all-engrossing subjects in heaven, the substance of the testimony of the prophets on earth, and the continual ministry of the Holy Ghost to the church now. The cross of Christ is the manifested love of God—that perfect love which casteth out fear. When we meditate on the wounds, and bruises, and sorrows of Jesus, in connection with our sins, when we see that we could be healed in no other way than by such stripes, and that it was our transgressions that caused Him such immeasurable agony, surely sin becomes exceeding hateful to us, while we adoringly own and magnify the wonders of redeeming love. The same lesson teaches us that the holy sin-hating God, is also a gracious sin-pardoning God. Neither sin, nor the world, nor Satan, look so dark anywhere as at the crucifixion of Christ, the only fountain of life, and light, and love, and peace. In the rent flesh of Jesus, we behold every barrier removed to the immediate entrance of the sinner that believes into the presence of God, and that with conscious acceptance and removal of all guilt. The Spirit of God comforts our souls by bringing Jesus and His work to our remembrance, and strengthens us with His flesh and blood, which is our bread from heaven.

In the twenty-second Psalm, there can be no mistake as to who the Person is that pours forth such intensely bitter cries to the Lord. It can be no other than the Holy One of God, for He says, “I was cast upon Thee from the womb, Thou art My God, from My mother’s belly,” “Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother’s breasts.” (vss. 9,10.) Surely such things can be said of none other than Emmanuel—the Holy Child Jesus. The birth-condition of every other child is the opposite, for we are “shapen in iniquity,” and go astray as soon as we are born, speaking lies; all by nature children of wrath, the carnal mind being enmity against God. The perfections of the Person of our Lord not only show us His capability of bearing the infinite wrath of God, and His exceeding suitability for our substitute, but also how surpassingly great those sufferings must have been, to One whose feelings were so exquisitely sensitive, on account of the infinite perfections of His holiness and love. That tender heart that had so pitifully and thoroughly entered into the deep distress of the widow at Nain, and so fully sympathized with sorrowing Martha and Mary, was now most deeply sensible of the scornful look and deriding jeer of the wicked assembly; but while He uttered unto His God, “All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn,” ... “They pierced My hands and My feet,” ... “They look and stare upon Me,” ... “They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture,” He also cried, in the abounding’s of His grace, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

It is most blessed to see how minutely our Lord poured out all His sorrows into the ear of Jehovah, whether they arose from the words and ways of the people, or from the overwhelming wrath and forsaking of His God. “He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” He likened Himself to being surrounded with many and strong bulls, compassed with dogs, enclosed by the wicked;

and He cried to be delivered from the sword, to be saved from the lion's mouth, and says He was heard from the horns of the unicorns. What love! What unfathomable sorrow! What depth of suffering! Though Jesus knew all things that should come upon Him, He drew not back; He set His face to go up to Jerusalem, with the cross in full prospect; and when Judas and the band came to take Him, He went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting. (Isa. 1.) He was indeed the Good Shepherd that laid down His life for the sheep. The frequent allusion that Jesus made to the cross, in His intercourse with His disciples, shows us how much the sufferings of that hour occupied His soul. It was for the joy that was set before Him, that He endured the cross, and despised the shame. "I have," said He, "a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." Not long before the sufferings of the cross came upon Him, He told His disciples, that the scripture, "And He was reckoned, among the transgressors," must yet be accomplished in Him. (Luke 22:37.) He also referred to His disciples being "scattered" (Matt. 26:31); but with what unutterable sorrow must the solemn scriptures in immediate connection with these references have premed upon His heart, wherein it is said, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief; Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin." "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My fellow, with the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd," &c. (Isa. 53:10-12; Zech. 13:7.)

So deep was the humiliation of Jesus, that He cried, "I am a worm, and no man," The people of Israel had privileges that were withheld from Him, when God "spared not His own Son." If they called upon the Lord in trouble, He heard and delivered them; but as a worm is trodden under foot, so low did our adorable Lord go down for our sakes, that He said, "Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered; they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." But, though "poured out like water," all His bones out of joint, His heart like wax melted in the midst of His bowels, His strength dried up like a potsherd, and His tongue cleaving to His jaws; still He is the doer of the will of Him that Kin Him, still He pours out His soul unto death, and, that the scripture might be fulfilled, He saith, I thirst." In the darkest moment He trusted in His God, and though feeling that Jehovah had brought Him into the dust of death, still He cried, "O My Strength, haste Thee to help Me;" and, when all that was written of Him was accomplished, He was heard.

Blessed indeed it is for us, beloved, that we now know Jesus as risen and glorified, and that He is not ashamed to call its brethren. The resurrection of Christ is God's public testimony to the value of His work on our behalf, thus speaking to our souls of full forgiveness of sins, and acceptance in Him our life and righteousness. So that praise is emphatically our becoming posture of soul, while we wait for His return from heaven. "Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him." (vs. 23.) The literal "seed of Jacob" will also yet praise Him, after they have looked upon Him whom they have pierced, for "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. 27:6.) And yet more than this: the kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15.), for "all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him." (vs. 27.) The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one. (Zech. 14:9.) We know that righteous judgment must precede the full display of this

“celestial,” and “terrestrial” glory, but it is pleasant to our souls to anticipate the time, when Jesus our Lord shall indeed see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, and when every knee shall bow to Him, who is still despised and rejected by so many.

ORTHODOX DOCTRINE, OR ACCURACY OF OUTWARD WALK, NO SUBSTITUTE FOR
CATHOLICITY. ■ There may be great practical insubjection to much revealed truth connected with the Church of God on earth, and with its hopes, while a living Christ is known, enjoyed, and fed upon, and the “speech,” consequently, “with grace, seasoned with salt.” On the other hand, there may be subjection to much of the word in the letter of it, great accuracy in doctrinal statement, great scriptural simplicity in all outward things as regards worship and the ordering of the Church, while a cold, sapless, saltless speech and ways, manifest, too unmistakably, that living communion with a living, risen Christ, is all but unknown. O brethren, think on these things! Christ’s flesh is meat indeed, His blood is drink indeed, He is Himself a satisfying portion, and if you are not abiding in Him by living faith, you will not be able to resist the ensnaring solicitations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, nor live so as to ensure the Lord’s approval at His appearing.

Matthew 11:27 through 30

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” ■ Matt. 11:28.

IT is the blessed work of the Holy Ghost to bring Jesus before us ■ to make Him everything. “He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” “All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore, said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” To this end, it was expedient that Jesus should go away.

The spiritual condition of our souls depends upon the views we have of Christ. Our communion with the Father and the Son, our joy and peace, the firmness and boldness of our faith, our strength for service, and willingness to suffer and endure for His name sake, depend entirely upon the character of experience we have in relation to Him.

It has ever been the work of Satan to lower the Person, Work, and Character of the Lord Jesus, that he might damage our souls, and make way against us. In Jesus we see the Father ■ His words, and works, are in Him revealed. To understand the one clearly, is to know the other also. (See John 14) It is very striking in this chapter, indeed throughout John’s gospel, how closely Jesus connects Himself with the Father; whilst He draws us to Himself, He draws us to the Father also.

We must, however, keep distinct in our minds, the Son in relation to His union with the Father as the sharer of all Divine fullness in His essential Godhead, and His rights as the anointed and risen Man. Ere Jesus commanded His Apostles to disciple all nations, He told them that all power in heaven and in earth was given unto Him. In the assurance of this, they were to make their way into all parts of the earth, to preach His name and gospel. The blessedness and fullness of this truth was to sustain their hearts in the midst of all the difficulties of the way. In time of danger and opposition they were to fall back upon it. The power thus delegated to Christ is a given power; He gets all in resurrection as the risen Man. Ere this He had a glory with the Father before the world was. (John 17) The glories of eternity, and of time, find in Him their common center.

There is a most striking and deeply interesting connection between these verses in Matthew 11, which I thus divide: ■

“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.”

“Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”

“Come unto Me, all ye that labor.”

“Take My yoke upon you.”

Jesus invites us to come to Him, and to take His yoke, on the ground that all things were delivered unto Him of His Father. In the blessed assurance of this, all who labor and are heavy laden are invited to come, with this gracious promise, that He will give rest. What meaning, therefore, there

is in the invitation to come—come unto One who possesses everything, and that, too, by the gift of the Father. The source of all fullness and blessing is now in Him. Paradise is lost. The land of Canaan is dissolved; the world under the curse is bringing forth its daily share of thorns and thistles; ruin and devastation everywhere abound. In the world we shall have sorrow and tribulation; but, blessed exception! in Jesus we have peace. “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.” Wondrous words! Well may we say with the disciples, “Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” All that the soul needs for refreshment and security are now to be found in Jesus, and only there. Floods of human anger may now prevail, and Satan roar on his prey like a lion; darkness may cover all the earth, and desolation spread everywhere; yet these words of Jesus, “In Me ye might have peace,” make the storm a calm; and so it shall be, till we reach the haven where we would be. No man knows the Father, and no man knows the Son, yet the believer knows both the Father and the Son. For the Father reveals the Son (Matt. 16:17), and the Son reveals the Father. (Matt. 11:27.) In the secret and power of this blessed mystery of the Father and the Son, the believer comes to Jesus, and is at peace, is safe, and is at home.

To come to Jesus is not to indulge in lawlessness, nor indifference, in relation to the things that concern His interests. We are called to bear His yoke, to serve Him daily, and the believer finds His service to be perfect freedom. He who puts the yoke upon us is meek and lowly in heart, therefore His yoke is easy, and His burden light, whilst all other yokes are oppressive and burdensome. He asks us to do nothing against our heart interests, and He sustains us in any service He is pleased to honor us with. Many seem to make their religion serve only their own ends; to escape hell, and to find a place hereafter in heaven, is all that Jesus and His cross are to them. Such seek to hold as much of the world as they can stretch their consciences to admit. They forget that if they are saved by Christ’s Cross, they have a daily one to take up, or else they cannot be His disciples. To follow Jesus fully, all for Him must be forsaken. The hatred of the world must be borne; it is enough for the servant to be as his Master. Christianity is the opposite of selfishness, “For (says the apostle) none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.” (Rev. 14:7, 8.) Jesus is the perfect sample of this as He is of every grace. “He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The Holy Ghost’s record of the glorified family is, “His servants shall serve Him” (Rev. 22:3); but of many it might now be fairly said, His servants do not serve Him. As in the days of Paul, so, alas! it is now, men are looking on their own things, and not on the things of others. I doubt whether peace of soul can be long maintained where service to Jesus is not the reigning motive of one’s life. It is said of those who put on His yoke, “ye shall find rest unto your souls.” I believe it will be found a matter of general experience, that those who refuse Christ’s yoke sin against their own souls. Not unfrequently when this first step in declension is taken, open sin follows. Happiness is not within the compass of human will and ability; it must come in God’s way and time. It is in the hands of Jesus, and He is pleased to bless His yoke-bearers with rest of soul. Nothing can make up for the loss of this. Jesus was a Son, yet He was a Servant also. His delight was to do His Father’s will; He went about doing good, and God was with Him.

Thus we have linked together, all things being delivered to Jesus of the Father, and the statement that the Father is revealed to the believer by the Son. Then the invitation, based upon these truths, to come to Him, being weary and heavy laden (as all believers are), and that He will give rest. All is

wound up with the Lord's loving command, to take His yoke and learn of Him, "and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Those who know the fullness that dwells in Him, will come to Him in every time of need, knowing that they shall not be disappointed. Those in whose hearts His love has engendered obedience take His yoke. Such only know what true rest of soul means. They find it in times of need and sorrow, and in the path of service, whilst all others hew out cisterns that can hold no water.

Mic. 5:7

IT is the absence of effort which characterizes the working of God. "The Lord of hosts is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." (Isa. 28:29.) Marvelous indeed are the achievements of man. He has done great things. But what noise, what laboriousness, are manifested in his working. And how often does he set some mighty engine in motion, which, despite all his caution, he is not able to control, and the creature of his hand asserts its power in the destruction of him that formed it, and set it in motion. But not to travel into the region of man's latest boast, that utility has made science its vassal, and that the genius of man has made every department of nature tributary to his own convenience; let us regard agriculture, and mark the contrast drawn in the Scriptures between the skill of man, and the blessing of heaven. "For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowest thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." (Deut. 11:10-12.) The fertility of Egypt depended, and still depends, on a laborious process of irrigation from the Nile. The narrow strip on the banks of the river, which the river, when it rises, overflows, or which man can water by artificial means, are amazingly fertile, but beyond this comparatively narrow margin all is sterile. But the land of Canaan depended entirely for its fertility upon the showers of heaven. If the early and the latter rain were not given from heaven, famine was the necessary result. Among the awful curses threatened against Israel for disobedience, is this, "Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed." (Deut. 28:23, 24.) This threat was fearfully verified in the days of Jeremiah. "The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads: because the ground is parched for there was no rain in the earth.... there was no grass." "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art thou not He, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon Thee; for Thou hast made all these things." (Jer. 14) How easy far God to execute His threatening's. "The showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain' (Jer. 3:3); and thus "He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground: a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." But how easy for Him to change the scene without any preparedness on man's part, like "showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." "He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and there He maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city of habitation, and sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase." (Psa. 107) "Immanuel's land," "the glory of all lands," is at this moment desolate because of the consummation of the wickedness of Israel in betraying and murdering the Son of God. Its blessing is deferred till they look upon Him whom they

have pierced and mourn, and find in Him a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. (Zech. 12:10-14, 13:1.) And then God shall send Jesus whom the heavens have received, and the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3:19, 21.) "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."

There is in our day a laborious effort to meet the physical misery, the moral degradation, and intellectual darkness of our dense population. For one or other of these objects, men associate together, and some with the energy of their minds, some with the liberal distribution of their money, and some by untiring diligence, manfully combat with the gigantic evils connected with a high state of civilization. Yet disappointment appears to characterize all those laborious efforts. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. 2:13, 14.) God has sounded the depth of human misery, and in accordance with his knowledge of its extent, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Nothing short of salvation really meets the necessity of man as a sinner; and salvation is of God. God begins with sin, the root of misery, man only battles against the effects of sin, and leaves the cause of all misery untouched. Where God acts, there is no laborious process, no noise, no excitement God needs no pioneer. This is beautifully set forth in the prophet Hosea, with respect to repentant Israel. "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face; in their affliction they will seek Me early. Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the former and latter rain unto the earth." (Hos. 5:15, 6:1-3.)

When God is graciously pleased to reveal Jesus to the soul of a sinner, how noiseless and without effort is the operation. Yet in that operation the mightiest act of divine power has been exercised, a power of the same order which raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at His right hand in heavenly places. How unconscious is the sinner whom God hath quickened, that he himself is the subject of such mighty power. The process to him has been "as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." He is conscious indeed of being in possession of a blessing, for which he has not in any wise labored. It must be of God. It is above either what he could have asked or conceived. He has a peace which passeth all understanding.

Such then is the way of God's action in grace. The mightiest of His operations is going on unheeded. It is not only the way of God above our ways, but the way most opposite to the spirit of the world, or of that even which presents itself as religion. How aptly is the false Church characterized by the harlot of the Proverbs. "She is loud and clamorous," entrapping souls by her sorceries. But even in the midst of the combinations of men for advancing the kingdom of God, how much more of human machinery is apparent, than dependence on God. Notwithstanding all this, God is pleased to work silently and effectually by His Spirit; in a manner unexpected by man, who often finds the machinery he has set in motion disturbed by the quiet, yet powerful action of God. The kingdom of God is presented to us, in the fourth chapter of St. Mark's gospel, under two different aspects. The one showing to us the quiet, unseen work of God, overlooked in the midst of the hurry of human interest, to shine forth as the effectual working of His power in transcendent

glory. The other, the mighty system raised by human energy, yet bearing the name of Christ, to be met with destructive judgment at the appearing of Jesus in glory. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

"And he said, whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? and with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than' all the seeds that be in the earth; but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it."

IF we dwell much on the mystery of the Lord's death upon the tree for us, we shall be able to praise God for withholding, or removing, as well as for giving. When Job was in the habit of offering burnt offerings, he met his most trying bereavements with "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:5, 21.)

Is not the contrite heart always connected with the joyful lip? (Psa. 32:5, 11:34:1, 18.)

If we are found speaking to our souls about God, as Psa. 62:5, Psa. 103 &c., we shall very soon be found speaking to God about our souls, as Pa. 43:1, 5, 8, 9.

WHERE God gives faith, does He not usually try it? and when He tries faith, is it not to increase it?

1 Kings 19; Nehemiah 1

In meditating on distinguished servants of God brought before us in the scriptures, and also in considering those of our own day, it may have been too much our habit to magnify their graces to the exclusion of their deficiencies, or to magnify their defects to the exclusion of their graces.

In looking at the histories of Elijah and Nehemiah, we may say that the times in which they lived were in some respects like our own. Everything of a corporate character had sadly failed, the estate of the people was very low, and there was little or no heart to turn to God. Scarcely anything could be worse than the position of the people in both instances; but the condition of the soul of Elijah when at Horeb, was very different to that of Nehemiah at the palace of Shushan, as was also the divine testimony concerning their service.

The state of Elijah's mind when in the wilderness is full of serious warning. It shows us that while we are exercised about the sins of others, how needful it is to have a just estimate of our own condition. Elijah was extremely sensible of the enormity of Israel's sin; their sad ways deeply occupied his soul. He had been a very bold, faithful, devoted, self-denying servant, and just before this had been wonderfully honored by the Lord God of Israel; but now, in his great concern for the people, he forgot his own failures. The consequence was, that instead of self-judgment and humiliation, with confession and prayer, he made intercession against Israel, and spoke as if he was the only faithful one, the only person in Israel that was "jealous for the Lord God of Hosts." In this there was some truth, but it was not grace and truth, as we see in the perfect Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." (1 Kings 19:10, 14.) Twice the Lord asks the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and each time he gives the same answer. Twice he talks of his own jealousy for the Lord God of Hosts. Twice he makes intercession against Israel, and twice he intimates that he is the only one in Israel that is on the Lord's side. The question that the Lord proposed, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" would have been a very searching one to him, had he been prepared to look into his own heart. The simple reply then would have been one of confession of his own lack of confidence in his God, and his failure in fleeing from Jezebel with earnest prayer for forgiveness. Had he thus cast himself upon the restoring grace of God, he would then, like Daniel and others, have prayed for and not against Israel.

God's answer to the conduct of Elijah is very remarkable. He thus commands him: "Anoint Elisha to be prophet in thy room;" and adds, "I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." There was also deserved judgment pronounced upon the people.

Does not this little history admonish us, beloved, to "cast the beam out of our own eye," as that which alone prepares the way for us to "see clearly to cast out the mote out of our brother's eye?"

Let us now look at Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's deep concern, when he heard that the people of God were in much affliction and reproach, that the city was lying waste, the wall of Jerusalem broken down, and the gates thereof burned with fire, plainly shows us that he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, though he boasted not of it. His readiness to leave the luxury and honor of the palace of Shushan, for the trials and conflicts of Jerusalem, teach us how true his heart was.

When Nehemiah heard of the sad condition of the Lord's people, we do not find that he made intercession against them, but he sat down, wept and mourned day after day, fasted, and prayed day and night to the God of heaven. He turned to the scriptures—sure sign of a soul really exercised before the Lord—he acknowledged his own sin, the sins of his father's house, the sins of the children of Israel, accepted God's chastisement, earnestly pleaded God's promises in the scriptures of truth, counted upon the Lord's restoring grace, and appealed to the faithful love of the God of Israel—“Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed, by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand.” (Neh. 1)

The sequel shows us how abundantly God answered his prayers, with what remarkable success his efforts were crowned, how greatly God was glorified, and His people benefited.

While we may be occupied, and rightly so too, about our position—and Nehemiah was not negligent of this—may we never forget our own condition of soul.

But further. Let us look, for a moment, from the servants to the Master. In Christ crucified, we see how inseparably the glory of God and the welfare of His people are connected together. He hath left us an example, that We should follow His steps. He would also have us wash the defiled feet of our brethren, as well as have our own feet washed. His love even overcame refusal, and so should ours. Peter would not allow the Lord to wash his feet. In the heat of a carnal moment he resisted such wondrous depths of divine grace. Nothing is so humiliating to the flesh as grace. But how did the Lord appeal to Peter? Did He imperiously threaten him? Did He say, if I wash thee not, I will have no part with thee? No, quite the contrary. He assured Peter that it was his profit, his blessing, his happiness, his companionship that his loving Lord sought. He therefore said unto him, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.” After this, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; AS I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” (John 13:6, 8, 34.) This command, however, was not great enough for Peter in his then condition of soul, for he vainly gave way to unwarrantable thoughts. Not content simply to take the place of obedience to his Master's word, he lost sight of his real condition, and through the deceitful workings of the flesh, under pretense of seeking the honor of the Lord, he said, “I will lay down my life for Thy sake.” (vs. 37.) This was a serious mistake of Peter's, and forcibly reminds us of that ancient axiom, “To obey is better than sacrifice.” Peter's fancied zeal for the honor of Christ led him into another error. In the rashness of mistaken energy, “he drew his sword, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear.” This was a terrible failure, and soon proved to be the harbinger of worse. The Lord could only reprove Peter by immediately healing the wound, and sheaving him that he knew not what manner of spirit he was of.

What instruction, beloved, do we gather from these things, but that true zeal for Christ, and a godly jealousy for the honor of His name and truth, (would that we had more!) must be carried on in the

Spirit of Christ, and according to the example and word of Christ, if we would ensure His companionship with us now, and His "Well done" at His appearing.

IF we say, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable".... "I will speak of the glorious honor of Thy majesty," and "the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy;" we should also, in the exercise of our souls, have the ready lip to say from the heart, "Every day will I bless Thee, I will extol Thee; I will bless Thy name forever and ever. (Psa. 145)

"The LORD HATH NEED OF HIM." If the Lord needed a colt, the foal of an ass, to carry out His own purposes (Matt. 21:3), how much more doth He need now in His service, His own flesh and bone. (Eph. 5:30; 1 Cor. 12:21.)

“Forbearing One Another in Love.”

[Translated from the French.]

WE are fond of giving all our lessons at once, and of insisting that every one shall, without hesitation, receive what we ourselves are convinced of. The apostle condemns this summary mode of proceeding. But in this forbearance of others, there is no concession of any part of the truth.

We dislike to be restrained in our actions, and we thus, by our example, hurry into presumption those who have not yet got rid of their ill-founded scruples. The apostle condemns the heartless violence which is thus inflicted on the weak. But this regard for the consciences of others does not involve the giving up of any part of the truth.

We should have consideration for the weak, in not requiring them to receive everything at once. They ought to advance step by step, as, in fact, we ourselves have done. It is a strange thing to imagine that our brethren should in one day accomplish what it has taken us so long a time to do....

The conduct prescribed to Christians toward the weak, in general, is similar to what we pursue toward little children. A father walks with short steps when leading his child who is trying to walk; he does not say to him, “You are tall, you are strong, you must walk like a man.” He says, “You are little and weak, and you often fall; but when you grow tall, you will walk like a man.” ...

If it be difficult for us to love those that are weak sufficiently to restrain ourselves from saying and exacting everything at once, it is perhaps more difficult for us to abstain, on their account, from certain lawful actions which might give them offense, or tempt them to go beyond their present convictions. It is so natural to make use of the coarse mode of preaching by our deeds, and harshly to wound consciences not yet thoroughly enlightened, instead of beginning by convincing them! The person that breaks the image of a saint, or insults a procession, imagines that he has done something for the conversion of Roman Catholics; whereas he has only driven some away from the truth by wounding them, whilst he has led others into unbelief by giving them an example which they will follow in defiance of the protestation of their secret feelings.

This is precisely what the apostle says in the four-tenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and in the eighth and tenth of the first epistle to the Corinthians. Doubtless, the advanced Christians in Rome and Corinth had the right to eat of all kinds of meats, without troubling themselves to ascertain whether they came from idolatrous sacrifices ■ “for the idol is nothing;” they would have been acting quite according to rule, provided they abstained from attending the festivals which were held in the temples, and from eating those meats which it was expressly told them had been sacrificed to idols; for, on the one hand, “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God,” but believers “cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:20, 21); and, on the other hand, the injunction is given, “Eat not, for his sake that sheaved it, and for conscience sake....conscience I say, not thine own, but of the other.” (vss. 28,

29.)

It was commanded to abstain only on these two accounts; but there were weak Christians, both in Corinth and in Rome, who were suspicious of all kinds of meats, and who, having an unfounded persuasion that the idol was something, and that what had been offered to it was thereby defiled in itself, would not eat any flesh. Now, observe in what manner the Holy Spirit enjoins us to act toward them, while, at the same time, He tells them that they are weak, and repeats eight or ten times in what their weakness and error consist: "To him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walked thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died...For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense." (Rom. 14:14, 15, 20.) "There is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled... Take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.... Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." (1 Cor. 8:7, 9, 11, 12.) "All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth... Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor. 10:23, 24, 32, 33.)

The secret of this charity, coupled with faithfulness, which the apostle here teaches, is to have consideration for others, and not for ourselves. We are perpetually apt to fall either into that indifference as to doctrine, which is ready to sacrifice the truth, or into that unyielding severity which goes straight forward without making allowance for any person, or anything. The disposition to judge others keeps us from exercising courtesy towards the weak, from avoiding those things which offend them, from dealing tenderly with even their ill-founded scruples, from warning them with love, and from leading them in this way to the full reception of the truth. "Why dost thou judge thy brother?" adds Paul, "or why dost thou set at naught thy brother?... Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." (Rom. 14:10, 13.)

The disposition to judge others is not only hurtful to those who are its objects, but it exposes ourselves to great danger also. "Pride goeth before destruction" (Prov. 16:18); the man who thinking himself strong, despises the weak, shall himself fall grievously. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12.)

Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

This does not mean, that we have the right to hold sacred a single error, or to change a single truth, or the smallest portion of the truth, whether doctrinal, moral, or ecclesiastical, in order to gain souls.

It does mean, that we have need of instruction in a profound science—the science of self-denial and self-subjection. To pride ourselves upon our performance of duty; to give forth immutable and peremptory formulas; to forget, in regard to others, that progressive course by which we ourselves attained the knowledge of the truth; and to wish to impose, in the mass, the whole of our

convictions upon our brethren, is not imitating the apostle who became “all things to all men.” It is not imitating Jesus, “who pleased not Himself;” but who, putting Himself within the reach, and, as it were, on the level of His hearers, stooped down toward them that He might raise them, and began the building up of their faith by laying the first stone deep down. Jesus unceasingly humbled Himself; He was in every respect here below “as he that serveth;” and yet, did He ever enter into a compromise with any error? ■ did He ever accommodate Himself to any prejudice? The life of our Master is the Divine commentary upon the words of the apostle. Go to the Saviour, ye who do not know what it is to become all things to all men, and He will teach you. From Him you will learn to put yourselves in the place of others—to begin with them at the beginning—not to judge them; and, to sum up all in one word, to forget yourselves.

I possess a right, but I can give it up when necessary. I have convictions, but I would not condemn those who have not as yet attained to them all. I protest against errors; but I would abstain from giving to my protestations the peremptoriness which would destroy souls, either by shocking them, or by inciting them to compliance without having convinced them. I would keep myself from a disposition to judge others; and, while immovably faithful in the defense of the whole truth, I would learn how to combat as a Christian, to discuss as a Christian, entertaining love for my adversaries, and respect for their persons, and possessing that true courtesy which does not in any degree involve a departure from uprightness. With my eyes fixed on Him who was “meek and lowly in heart,” I endeavor to “overcome evil with good.” Alas! we have been telling what we ought to do, ■ what we desire to do; we dare not speak of what we actually do.

Thus, as we have just seen, it is very easy to become all things to all men at the expense of truth—it is less so to do it at our own expense; but this second way is the only way authorized by God.

TROUBLE AND PEACE. ■ Sorrow in some shape or other is our portion here. “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” We must not expect it to be otherwise, but should take up our daily cross. The blessed Lord when here was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The world lieth in the Wicked-one, it has no sympathy with Christ, or His followers. Our adversary goeth about tempting and deceiving, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. In our flesh dwells no good, and we have the sentence of death in ourselves. Our true peace and consolation are alone in God, through Christ. His faithful, unchangeable love is our never-failing spring of comfort. Hence, in the deepest sorrow, we may sing,

‘Though waves and quicksands deep,
Through all my passage lie,
Yet Christ will safely keep,
And guide me with His eye:
My anchor hope shall firm abide,
And I each boist’rous storm outride.’

On the Ministry of the Word

“Preach the word.” ■ 2 Tim. 4:2.

“How can they preach, except they be sent.” ■ Rom. 10:15.

“I DETERMINED,” said that blessed servant of God, the Apostle Paul, “not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1 Cor. 2:2-5.)

Paul’s testimony (2 Thess. 1:10) ■ the testimony of God concerning His Son (1 John 5:9, 10) ■ the dispensation of the gospel ■ the stewardship of the mysteries of God committed to Paul (1 Cor. 9:17; 4:1,2), he made known, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; not sounds, but living words, virtues, divine goings forth, clothed in the forms of human speech; yet not of man, neither by man. (Gal. 1:12.) Not merely something about Christ, but the ministration of Life, and of Righteousness (2 Cor. 3); yea, the ministration of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 6); the revelation of Christ Himself, by the Holy Ghost; the formation (in those who believed the preaching) of Christ in them, the hope of glory. (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27.)

Whoever has such a call desireth not his own ease or reputation, but the honor and glory of Almighty God, and the service of the Lord Jesus, the Master, to whom it belongs to thrust forth laborers into His harvest.

To minister salvation through the death of Christ, for the glory of God, we must ourselves be partakers of the efficacy thereof. We must know, not in word, letter, or form, but in power, the dying of the Lord Jesus. The precious treasure must be put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of strength and sufficiency may be of God, and not of us. The kingdom of God, the display of the grace and glory of Him, who, though crucified through weakness, yet liveth by the power of God, is not in word, but in divine efficiency. To serve the Lord Christ, and not one’s own belly, demands the casting into the divine treasury, not that which costs us nothing, not of our abundance, but that whereon we live, even all our living. Thus did He, who was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, whom God sent, who came in the Father’s name, serve. He gave His life a ransom for many. He laid it down at the commandment of the Father, and took it again, that we might be with Him in everlasting blessedness.

One greater than those who preach must call, must send, must give gifts, and pay wages. No one goeth on such a warfare at his own charges. The servant’s sufficiency is solely of God. Thus to be upheld, and made a co-worker with the Almighty, participating in, and communicating as He in-worketh first to will and to do in the vessel, this is no human institution and arrangement. It is not of men, neither by man, nor through man, but of God the Holy Ghost, and the authority of the risen Head. Who then can prepare himself? Who can lay up in store and forge weapons for such service, and its attendant conflicts with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies? “To me,” said Paul,

“who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” (Eph. 3:8.)

Testimony of a Dying Saint

“THE life I have received from the Lord, and which has been manifested through my birth from above, will go to Him. It is His own life and spirit I have been mile partaker of. I shall not yet be in the glory, but I shall rest with Jesus till He comes■till He is revealed from heaven. I shall hear the shout■ the shout of joy that the hour is come; when He will present the Church unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: when the sons of God will be manifested with Him, as such, to angels and to the world. The trumpet will be blown over my sleeping dust, and all the dead in Christ will rise with me■all who have loved the Lord, who have followed and served the Lord. Our spirits will be reunited to our own bodies, quickened and changed by His Spirit which dwelleth in them, and they will be glorified, bright and beautiful, like the body of our Lord at His transfiguration.”

The Righteousness of God by Faith

“And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” ■ Phil. 3:9.

“David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” ■ Rom. 4:6.

“A ROBE I must have,” said the beloved Berridge, “of one whole piece, broad as the Law, spotless as the light, and richer than an angel ever wore ■ the robe of Jesus.” The fact is, that the Lord Jesus was not only the perfect Man, and thus rendered to Jehovah the perfection of obedience due from man, but He was also God ■ “God manifest in the flesh” ■ thus there was infinite acceptability and divine worth in all that He did. It is by His obedience that “many are made righteous” ■ even “the righteousness of God” which is unto and upon them by faith. Spotless angels around the throne of heaven excel in strength and do the will of God, but theirs is a creature-righteousness; faultless in its kind, without doubt, but it falls short of “the righteousness of God.” How wonderful is the standing of the believer! How near is he brought! How “complete in Christ” he is! What an everlasting and unchangeable righteousness is “the righteousness which is of God by faith!” What grace, that sinners of the Gentiles should have this spotless robe! How rich in mercy is God! “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” (Rom. 10:4.)

‘Had I an angel’s holiness

I’d lay aside that beauteous dress,

And wrap me up in Christ.’

Ex. 22:27; Deut. 24:10

THE Apostle Paul speaks of the Jew, as having “the form of knowledge and of the truth in the Law.” (Rom. 2:20.) The Law gave, as it were, an outline of the knowledge of God; but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, is the only One who has fully declared Him. Still there are traits of the Divine character incidentally brought out in the civil and social law, which it pleased the Lord to give to Israel, very distinct from the stern manifestation of righteousness in the awe-striking words they heard from Sinai. Many of the laws given to Israel have the solemn sanction, “I am the Lord,” or “I am the Lord your God.” (See Lev. 19) But when God showed His tender regard for human feeling and misery, He gave the sanction for the judgment or law, in these words, “for I am gracious.” “If thou at all take thy neighbor’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it to him by that the sun goeth down; for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin; wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass when he crieth unto Me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.” God considers the feelings of the poor, and He would not have those feelings needlessly wounded. There may be a sense of degradation in poverty sufficiently trying of itself, without others attempting to force it on the poor. God has shown that the poor need sympathy, and they can appreciate it; not only is it written, “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker,” but also, “Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker.” (Prov. 14:31; 17:5.) The sympathy of Jesus with human necessities anticipated the expression of them. “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat, and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.” (Matt. 15:32.) “Love vaunteth not itself.” It was not the display of miraculous power in satisfying the need of the multitude which moved Jesus, but compassion for their necessities. “For I am gracious.” He considers, human feelings. There was no murmuring or complaining among the multitude, but He knew what they needed, and graciously provided it. Man in the progress of civilization is met by a gigantic mass of human misery and necessity, which seems to contradict his lofty aspirations. He uses the various appliances at hand to relieve this misery; but man is not gracious, for in relieving the misery of his fellow man, he makes him keenly to feel his inferiority. We can often trace up misery and poverty to its source; and if we can do this, how much more can God, the moral Governor of the world, link together cause and effect, and show the necessary connection between sin and misery. But God “upbraideth not,” for He is gracious, and this He shows where the case is most desperate. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help. I will be thy King.” (Hos. 13:9, 10.) But human efforts, right as they are, want, for the most part, the blessed element of graciousness, and, therefore, they fail to reach the heart. God who knows sin to be the source of all misery, regards the actual misery in fullness of compassion. Even in forgiving sin He does it so graciously as to win the heart of the sinner unto Himself. Do we not read the heart of God Himself in giving such a law as that of the pledge of raiment. Man must regard such a principle as an inroad on all security; for man is not gracious; he thinks of himself. God is gracious, and thinks of human misery, and regards human feelings.

There is sometimes an intrusiveness into the private concerns of the poor on the part of those who desire to do them good, which is not only repugnant to their feelings, but offensive to Him who is "gracious." Mark the graciousness of this law: "When thou dost lend thy brother anything, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee." (Deut. 24:10, 11.) The poor brother might be sufficiently pressed down by a sense of his own misery, without having that misery increased by the discovery to another of his nakedness and poverty. When grace has won confidence, all will be laid bare; but rigid inquiry will often lead to concealment and deception. It is a lesson to be learned from Him who is gracious, to do a kind act in a kind manner. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;" for He Himself is the cheerful giver of the unspeakable gift of His own Son.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;" the stern Reprover of sin, and the One who pitied the sinner, met together in Him. Look at forgiveness with man. The forgiver makes the forgiven to have a keen sense of his inferiority. Not so forgiveness with Him who is gracious. He forgives in such a gracious way, as not only not to make the forgiven conscious of disgrace, but so as to establish perfect confidence with Himself. The poor prodigal was disgraced in his own eyes, and thought at best of only a degraded position in his father's house. He knew not that his father was gracious. His father welcomes him as his son to his bosom, and instead of degrading him in the eyes of the household, killed the fatted calf on his account. "For I am gracious." May we not only know His graciousness, but in our measure reflect it, according to the word of the Apostle, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved, us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor."

When Moses sought to see the glory of the Lord, how marvelous the answer. "I will make all My goodness pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Grace and mercy necessarily go together; but how many apprehend that God is merciful, who know not that He is gracious? How many have acknowledged a merciful deliverance or escape, and with grateful emotions of heart too, who have never, as it were, got an insight into the heart of God. His mercy is indeed over all His works. But when He proclaims His name to Moses safely hidden in the cleft rock, it is, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Men must see the mercy of God in His providential ordering of the things of this world; for our Father is "kind to the unthankful and to the evil." "He is the Saviour (that is, the Sustainer and Preserver) of all men, but specially of them that believe." But it is in redemption that we see so conspicuously the grace of God. All comes to us on the ground of mercy, for we can prefer no claim on God, but the very mercy which reaches us, exhibits the character of God in a way to win our hearts unto Him. We can "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." For He is gracious. The depth of our misery has brought out the depth of His love. Safe in Christ and Him crucified, the true cleft Rock, the joy of our hearth is always to hear Him proclaiming His name, "For I am gracious." God is not man. His ways are not the ways of man. Man, in doing even a kind act, shows that he is man; and God, in exhibiting His kindness, shows that He is God. "How shall I give thee up,

Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repenting's are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man." (Hos. 11:8, 9.) "Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you." (Isa. 30:18.)

Acts 1:8

WHAT an honorable position, even in this present life, has Christ set His people in! We should feel it to be so. Among men it is considered no small honor, to be an ambassador, or representative, of a worthy and mighty prince; its honor is felt to be more than a compensation for the trials and self-denial connected with the service. But how much more should God's dear children feel the incomparable dignity of being witnesses to the majesty and glory of the person and work of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," said the risen Jesus, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This, surely, is the great business of the Christian's life; for what are we left in the world for, but to savor of Christ? Jesus has died for us. He has purchased us with His own blood. He has made us His own, having taken us up into everlasting union with Himself, and, for a little season, has left us here to be the "light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." If His saints be dumb, there is not another voice throughout the length and breadth of this densely-peopled world to espouse the cause of the crucified Son of God. If the redeemed refuse to sing the praises of the Lamb, then is there not an inhabitant of the globe to extol His goodness, and to speak His praise? The glorious sun shining forth in daily brightness, the glittering stars cheering the midnight scene with surpassing beauty, the ceaseless foam of the tumultuous ocean, and the ever-fresh and ever-varying manifestations of animated nature, all speak aloud of the wonder-working power of the great Creator; but the testimony to the everlasting efficacy of the blood of the Cross, the proclamation of free and full forgiveness of sins, the wondrous depth and height of redeeming love, are reserved for those only who have tasted in their own souls that the Lord is gracious. If Christ had no witnesses, then, indeed, would the world become a dark cavern, awfully enveloped in midnight shades, without a ray of heavenly light, or the smallest testimony to the riches of divine grace.

Bright angels around the throne of God have their appointed sphere of ministry; but beautiful and perfect in its kind as the service of those ministers which are as a flame of fire is, still the honor of being Christ's "witnesses" before an evil and gainsaying generation is not delegated to them. Angels might comfort the weeping woman at the empty sepulcher, by the glad announcement that the Lord was risen from the dead; but the beloved fisherman of Galilee, who had shed many a bitter tear at the remembrance of his sinful ways, and who could glory in being himself a debtor to sovereign grace, he, and not the brightest angel, must astonish, and instrumentally deliver thousands of his fellow-sinners at Jerusalem, by preaching to them, in the power of the Holy Ghost, the victory that Christ had accomplished in triumphing over the powers of death and hell. Again, an angel of God faithfully executes his commission, by communicating to the praying Centurion at Caesarea, that he should send for the honored man of God at Joppa, who would tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved; but it was not the angel's province to declare to Cornelius' household that life-giving soul-saving testimony of redemption through Christ, which was so successful by the mouth of Peter. The Apostle John also may receive a revelation from Jesus through an angel, but man, and not angels, must unfold these wondrous depths of love and favor to the blood-bought Church, and thus enable her to witness to the grace and glory of the

Lamb to the uttermost part of the earth.

Further, the records of history furnish us with examples of mighty men of the world with vast intellectual powers, and uncommon physical abilities, who have been instruments of God in devastating kingdoms, deposing kings, and overturning empires; but the high and holy “testimony of Jesus Christ” was never entrusted to them. The sinner saved by grace alone has the distinguished honor of living and dying as Christ’s witness—of showing forth the praises of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvelous light. Would that we more fully esteemed the privilege of being Christ’s witnesses, beloved! Would that this honor that cometh from God only had a more grateful response in our hearts! Would that, when in any little way we find that suffering and rejection for Christ’s sake is our portion, we could, like olden saints, “rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for His name!”

It is important to notice, that before our Lord told His disciples that they should be His “witnesses,” He informed them that they should “receive power” from the Holy Ghost. Yes, brethren, our Lord Jesus has not only called us to serve Him, but “He giveth strength unto His people.” We are not led into the warfare at our own charges. We are not to trust to broken cisterns, or fall back upon the sandy foundation of human resources. We are not to attempt the fruitless effort of being Christ’s witnesses with fleshly weapons. It is by the power of the Holy Ghost that we bear the true “testimony of Jesus Christ.” He only is the Glorifier, Testifier, and Remembrancer of Christ. Heart and flesh fail in serving the Lord Christ, but God is the strength of our heart. The Spirit searcheth the deep things of God, reveals Christ to us, keeps us in communion with the Father and the Son, enables us to abide in the True Vine, and thus bring forth good fruit. Let us exhort one another to cherish an experimental acquaintance with the guidance and power of the Holy Ghost! It is not the busy efforts of unsubdued nature, or the argumentative abilities of the natural mind, that will enable us to confront our enemies, or to be faithful representatives of Him whose name and truth we bear. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

There is such a thing in our day as religion without Christ, but this is not the Shepherd’s voice. The Lord’s little ones are well assured that “Christ is all,” and they acknowledge it to be their privilege, no less than their duty, to confess His name. May we have grace, beloved, to be Christ’s “witnesses” at all times, in all our relationships of life, in our houses, in our daily matters of business, in the Church, and in the world; then, with truth, shall we be able to say with the Apostle, “For me to live is Christ.”

The Way of Faith, and Backsliding

IT is only as we are consciously standing in the grace of God that we are peaceful, or enabled to overcome in the hour of temptation. Very many things present themselves to take the eye and heart away from Jesus. Even the necessary occupations of life, the blessings that God bestows, the suggestions of our fellow-disciples, or seal in the service of God, may be used by our great Adversary, to draw away our affections from Christ. We need to be watchful, as well as prayerful, lest we enter into temptation. Our foes are many, subtle, and powerful, and often emanate from sources we little expect. Conflict we sometimes feel to be very sharp and close. We may be truly said to wrestle against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. But Christ is in us as well as for us; and by His strength we can overcome all that oppose our heavenward course. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13.) This is the vantage ground on which the believer is set, and he is exhorted to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;" "to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

The course that our enemies pursue is very varied. The artful spell of flattery is as much to be dreaded as the lion's roar. Self-love, fond desires, fear of man, pride, and creature confidence, are like so many strings stretched by the unbelieving workings of nature, ready for the touch of the Adversary, unless the new man, in the energy of faith, foil the wily foe. We feel this, and learn experimentally that we are kept by the power of God through faith; and thus are often constrained to look up to our God and cry, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wings."

Backsliding is the natural tendency of our deceitful hearts. The moment we walk by sight and sense, we cease to walk by faith; and, therefore, turn away from God. It is one of the most important points that a Christian is called to watch against. "Take heed," says the Apostle, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." (Heb. 3:12.) Unbelief is the root of every abomination. As the strength of our inner man is of God, and our many upholding's, deliverances, and restorations are to be ascribed to the riches of His grace, so all our follies and falls are traceable to unbelief—to forsaking Him who is our only strength, and turning to some rotten staff of carnal confidence, or to some broken cisterns of our own hewing out.

It has been said by some, that a Christian is either growing in the divine life, or declining; and it is certainly true. Faith or unbelief, Christ or self, one or the other, each moment has the ascendancy. In each conflict, we either prevail or are overcome. In each temptation, we either stand or fall. Every moment's occupation is either sowing to the flesh or spirit. We walk either with Christ or with His enemies. We often try to convince ourselves that we are not walking in the flesh, and with the world, when we really are—that we are not backsliders, when we are not in communion with God. If we are living and walking by faith, we shall be abiding in the grace of God, for faith always looks to Christ; we shall be feeling our weakness, learning more and more our deep necessity of Christ, and realizing increasingly that all His fullness is ours. Such do not lean on their store of knowledge, their past experience, their gifts, their graces, their brethren, nor even on their prayers,

but on Christ. They do not carry their own burdens, nor oppress themselves with their own cares, but cast them upon the Lord. They have an assurance in their own souls that there is no real blessing in anything apart from Christ, and that, severed from Him, they can do nothing. They know Christ to be a sure Rock to build upon, a safe Hiding-place, a never failing Refuge, an exhaustless Spring of joy, a River of peace, a Fullness of strength, their Life, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption; their Bridegroom, Husband, Friend; their Altar, their all-sufficient Sacrifice, their all-prevailing High Priest; the Renewer of their strength, the Restorer of their souls, the Keeper of their feet; their Head, their Lord, their ALL. The Person, work, and offices of Christ are, by the Spirit of God, the ever-fresh and all-refreshing subjects of their meditation. They know God's unspeakable Gift to be a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it, and so inestimably valuable is Christ to their souls, that they deny self, take up their cross, and follow Him. Conscious, however, that they have already attained but little of the knowledge of Christ, and learning more and more the deceitfulness of their own hearts, they still cry, Draw us, we will run after Thee! knowing there is no safety but in keeping close to Jesus, no joy but in the apprehension of God's love. Their souls long to be able to comprehend more of the inexhaustible fullness in Christ for them, they long exceedingly to realize more of the powerful workings of Christ in them, and desire also more sensibly to enjoy the presence of Christ with them. Knowing that they are no longer far off, but made nigh to God by the blood of His Son, that the banner of divine unchanging love waves over them, they taste and enjoy something of the Father's fellowship with His returned prodigal, in eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the slain Lamb; and while the wondrous burst of love from the Father's heart is, "Let us eat and be merry," each grateful response is, "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love." (Song of Sol. 2:4.) They have a ceaseless song of joy in the knowledge of what they have been redeemed from, what they have been redeemed unto, and what they have been redeemed by. This is standing in grace. This is laying hold on eternal life. This is the profession of faith we are called to bear witness to.

Further. Those who live by faith go forward, feeling that the blood of Christ has made a line of demarcation between them and the world, and that they are not of it, but delivered from it. Christ is their comfort, their example, and their strength. Knowing they are saved, they choose the narrow road, the good path, the peaceful, profitable, and pleasant ways of wisdom. They grow in grace. They diligently "add to their faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." In this path faith prospers, Christ becomes more precious, assurance strengthens, pilgrims "never fall," God is glorified, and believers fight the good fight, and finish their course with triumph. (See 2 Peter 1)

Such seem to me to be a few essential points of the life and walk of faith, the fruit of abiding in Christ, of keeping near the Fountain of Living Water. Backsliding is the departure of the heart from the living God, and there may be much progress in the evil way, before it is manifest to any, except to Him who searcheth the heart. "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But there is another path, and it looks enticing to the natural eye, but the eye of faith perceives that an unseen hand has inscribed at its entrance, "The way of transgressors is hard" ■ "Enter not." Many are seen crowding into it, boasting of its antiquity, ease, pleasures, and refinements. Self-will, disobedience, and carnal wisdom abound. Religiousness, and many things highly

esteemed among men■ “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of the life”■are also found in great variety; but there is no companionship with Christ. Human greatness, tradition, philosophy, and vain deceit, are upheld, to the rejection of the Spirit of God, the Christ of God, and the Scriptures of God. The honor of Christ, the finished work of Christ, the unchanging love of Christ, the speedy return of Christ, are matters little accounted of in this road; and every reason that can be invented, is pleaded for not praying in secret, not reading the scriptures, not loving the brethren. This path, however, though pleasant and attractive to the senses at first, sooner or later exhibits its real character. Those who pursue it find that murmuring, fretfulness, darkness, barrenness, and disappointment are here, without any solid ground to rest upon, or any true solace to compose the fainting or troubled spirit. The further it is followed, the more effectually the Lamb of God is hidden from the soul; and that scripture is fulfilled, “The backslider in heart is filled with his own ways;” the ashes of self is all he has to feed on, and restlessness, and vexation of spirit, mark his experience; till, by sovereign grace, he is quickened, and brought with confession of his sin into the presence of God and the Lamb, then he tastes the grace of God afresh, lays hold of His promises; and, realizing the all-cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, he confesses that “salvation is of the Lord.” All who have had much experience in divine things are well acquainted with the reality of these two ways■ the way of faith, and backsliding. The scriptures abound with examples of these two things. Let us look at a few.

As long as Abram went on obeying the voice of God, building altars, and calling on the name of the Lord, a pilgrim and a sojourner, trusting in the daily care and preserving mercies of Jehovah, all went well with him; but when in the time of trial he did not stand with God, but took matters into his own hands, obeyed the dictates of fleshly wisdom, and went down into Egypt in order to deliver himself, we find not only that he lost fellowship with God, and fell into grievous sin, but so fearful, even in the eyes of the ungodly, was his lack of moral integrity, that they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.” (Gen. 12)

We also see in Rebecca’s history, that God gave her a distinct promise to sustain her soul, and guide her thoughts, concerning her two sons■ “The elder shall serve the younger.” But the time came when God’s simple word was not enough for her■sure indication of a backsliding heart■so that she could not any longer tread the path of faith and patience. Speaking naturally, things were looking against the fulfillment of God’s word. Isaac had called for Esau to bless him. She could not then trust God. The subtle workings of unbelief guided her thoughts; and not only did she sin against God, and deceive her husband, but led her younger son astray, taught him to tell lies, and to deceive his own father; the bitter consequences they both severely reaped for many years. (Gen. 26, 27) O beloved, let us beware of the contriving’s of unbelief!

Look also at David. As long as he had no plans of his own, was content to walk in any path God appointed him, and went on day by day trusting in God, he was enabled to overcome self, the lion, the bear, Goliath, Saul, acc.; his soul evidently prospered, and grew in the knowledge of God. But when he turned out of wisdom’s ways, when he relinquished the life of faith, and ceased to lay hold of the truth that he was God’s anointed king, when he leaned unto his own understanding, and falsely concluded, “I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;” from that time he left the highway of faith and holiness, entered into “the way of transgressors,” and the carnal stratagem of going into the land of the Philistines, very soon resulted in lying, deceit, and cruelty; until the Lord’s rod of correction came upon him, in burning up Ziglag, and taking away all that he had; when he

again turned to God, and found His never-failing grace all-sufficient for him. "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God; and so richly did restoring grace abound, that the servant of the Lord recovered all, and he had much spoil beside." (1 Sam. 27, 30) Saints of God, let us beware of unbelieving thoughts, lest they lead us into unbelieving ways, and their consequent sorrows! Let backsliders count upon the all-sufficiency of restoring grace, and encourage themselves in the Lord their God!

Love of ease, conveniences, luxuries, &c., often lead the souls of saints astray, for the life of faith is always connected with the fight of faith. This is the time for conflict and service; we shall rest by and by. As long as David fought against the enemies of the Lord, he was preserved and he triumphed; but when fighting was exchanged for lounging on the bed at even-tide, and walking upon the palace roof, then the Adversary was too strong, the lust of the eye prevailed against the man after God's heart. (2 Sam. 11) Believers, let us remind each other how opposite the love of ease and luxury is to the way of faith, and let us take warning!

In Hezekiah, also, we have another solemn example brought before us. He was indeed a man of faith. When prayer and dependence upon God marked his path, the power and blessing of God were singularly with him: The work of God prospered in his hands, and there was great reviving. In answer to prayer, on one occasion, an angel was sent from heaven, and destroyed in one night, one hundred and eighty thousand of the enemy's army; and, at another time, after pouring out his soul to God, in the last extremity, the prophet Isaiah was sent with healing blessing. But the honors and presents of the uncircumcised were the means of leading his heart away from the way of faith. Instead of witnessing to them of the grace and power of the God of Israel, the vain desires of nature were so stirred up, that he entertained them by chewing "the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the honor of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures; there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah showed them not." God's solemn discipline followed. (Isa. 39) Beloved brethren in Christ, let us fear men's smiles more than their frowns! "A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet." (Prov. 29:5.)

But there is another point. The Old Testament gives us a solemn example of one prophet misleading another. (See 1 Kings 13) In the New Testament, also, we see repeatedly how the Adversary used Peter and the other disciples, to present temptation to the blessed Lord. These are indeed peculiarly weighty points for consideration, and will have a profitable effect upon our souls, if they lead us more sincerely and simply to walk with God in obedience to His word, not as serving men, but God which trieth our hearts.

Here let us pause, beloved. If we have been kept abiding in the enjoyment of the grace of God, let us adoringly worship, and give Him the praise. Much of the scriptures of truth are taken up with instruction and examples concerning the way of faith and backsliding. We see the perfection of the life and fight of faith in Jesus. He trusted in Jehovah at all times. He resisted sin unto blood.

'He is now our nearest Friend,

And His love will never end.'

It may be that some who seriously ponder this subject, in the presence of God, will discover that they are no strangers to the backsliding path. The absence of earnest, persevering, closet prayer;

the love of self, and ease, and luxuries; the fashionable furniture; the costly dress; the diligence in seeking after, or retaining uncertain riches; the worldly habits; the unready hand to minister to the Lord's poor and needy, will, perhaps, read a tale to some, and convince them that they have wandered far from the highway of faith and holiness, which is the narrow, and only path of fellowship with the earth-rejected, heaven-welcomed Son of God. Should, however, such discoveries lead souls with confession and supplication to the Father of mercies, how soon will His restoring grace put forth fresh vigor into their hearts, and conduct them into holier and happier ways, connected both with present blessing and the Lord's approval in the day of His coming! O to be so satisfied with Christ, that feeling that in Him we have all things, and can want nothing which He is not able and willing to supply, our continual song may be,

'Nothing on earth do I desire,

But Thy pure love within my breast;

This, only this, will I require,

And freely give up all the rest.'

Exodus 12, 13

WE observe here the simple condition of heart which the child-like reception of the Gospel puts the people into, in the ordinance of the Passover. They had just to put the blood on the lintel for their security; and this is the attitude of the believer. We have to quiet our hearts, and the more passive we are the more happy. We have not to reason about the Gospel at all; we are not to go to heights or to depths, but to receive the word of God.

Then, as soon as the peace was secured by this simple act; (simple it was, for they had not even to leave their houses, but just to stretch their hands to their door and to put the blood there,) then follows communion. As soon as we know Jesus as the Saviour, we learn Him in companionship; but their safety did not depend on their communion.

The communion of the people of God is diverse; some feed more deeply than others, yet all have the same blood to trust in, and all are equally saved. Let us remember this in our onward course; and while we have one common Salvation, may we be prepared for varieties in our measures of communion with God, and that some should feed with a deeper and a richer relish. So is it again with the girding of the loins and the taking of the staff; varieties in these exercises are found in the saints: and what we have to desire, in this night of Egypt, is that we may behave ourselves in the true character of Israelites. The blood on the lintel tells us they have done with the judgment of Egypt; the unleavened bread and the girdle on the loins tell us they have done with Egypt itself. Every renewed soul, in the deliberateness of its judgment and purpose, has done with Egypt, has done with the flesh and the world; that night, therefore, was a separation from the judgment of Egypt, and also a separation from Egypt itself. The same ordinance that separates from one, separates from the other.

The day of the new birth! I like to have it engraved on the heart, "that dear and blessed day." So here in 31st verse, they needed not Pharaoh to tell them to rise up; they were up already. In 39th verse we read they had not time to leaven their cakes. So, just as Pharaoh needed not to tell them to rise up and go, in the same way they had no opportunity to leaven their cakes. The renewed soul that has learned the value of the blood has learned also the character of the world. When they observed this ordinance in the land they were going to, and their children should ask them wherefore they did it, the simple answer was, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover. The principle of grace accounts for all. I was in Egypt, and the Lord delivered me from it. So in Romans 12, the mercies of God are to account for our actions, as well as to guide them. Now, beloved, how far have you and I bowed down to the reasonableness of such a motive, "the mercies of God?" It is "our reasonable service." And see in Exodus 13:17, how exceedingly gracious this is of the Lord. He knows that fears possess our poor hearts, and He prepares for us accordingly. They meet Amalek, but they learn this lesson, that Amalek lies is the very road where the tender compassion of the Lord had led them. If any trouble meets you in the road, say it is the necessity of the journey. We must have tribulation. Never think the Lord has been careless about us, but remember there is a necessity for passing to the kingdom through tribulation. Thus do we prove the grace of Jesus.

(19.) Here are pictures of our condition, “the bones of Joseph”■the bones of the saints are just as much interested as Moses and Aaron. These handfuls of sacred dust are carried out in the glorious march.

(21.) It was the business of the Blood to shelter them in Egypt, but now the Pillar becomes the glorious leader of their camp.

In salvation the blood of Jesus wants no help, but the moment the Blessed Spirit is needed, that moment he attends on the camp. Oh, then, if GOD be for us, who can be against us? We know what Christ has done, and we enjoy too what the Spirit is doing for us. The love of the Son delivering us, the love of the Spirit taking up our history as a delivered and a ransomed people! Thus the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are all for us.

2 Sam. 9, 19

JONATHAN'S love for David is one of the most lovely instances of unfeigned love we have in Scripture. The Holy Ghost thus records it, "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." (1 Sam. 18:3, 4.)

The more God is found to be with David, the more exceedingly Saul hates David. He knew that he was to succeed him, and that Jonathan should not be established in the kingdom. Jonathan knew this also. Yet he succored David, and saved him from the hand of his father; for his love rose above all personal considerations. Jealousy does not weaken or disturb it. "Many waters cannot quench love." "Love never faileth." "I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

In David also, the man after God's own heart, we see the same spirit. His lamentation over Saul and Jonathan is a beautiful expression of love rising above all personal advantages. "And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!...From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.....I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." (2 Sam. 1:17, 19, 22, 26.)

The Amalekite supposed that David would be greatly pleased by his bringing tidings of Saul's death, and laying his crown at David's feet. But he little knew the springs of faith and love which dwelt in David's heart. David regarded the death of Saul as the fall of the Lord's anointed, and an occasion of triumph to the enemies of Jehovah and His people. Faith views everything according to the mind of God; and "faith worketh by love." Thus, whilst Saul's death gave the kingdom to David, and so ended his troubles, he regards the death of Saul and Jonathan in the light of God's presence, and not according to the selfish thoughts of man. How lovely it is when self is laid aside, and faith and love are the springs of our affections and judgments.

David rejoices not over a fallen enemy, after the manner of men. His lamentation is more to his honor than the crown he then received.

The affection of David for Jonathan did not end here. His was no transient burst of feeling. The glory of the kingdom did not efface Jonathan from his affections. When established on his throne, we find him asking, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Sam. 9:1.) "The kindness of God" (vs. 3) fills David's heart towards the house of Saul, for Jonathan's sake. Here is the strength of an old affection in the heart of David. How needful it is to cultivate this spirit. We live in days of great change; friendship and affections long formed are easily dissolved. A sure proof of how little our kindness is the kindness of God, and our affections the affections of Christ. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved

us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan is the only one found of the house of Saul. How generously David behaves to him. He restores him all the possessions of Saul, and adds, "Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually... as one of the king's sons." This needs no comment. Here is enduring love. This is using power in a way worthy of the leader of God's people. The butler forgot Joseph when he was raised up. David, in the day of his exaltation, remembers Jonathan.

In after years, when David is in affliction and flees from Absalom, and then returns to his throne and house, how beautiful is the behavior of Mephibosheth. As David had sown so now he reaps.

"The king said unto him, Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth?" (2 Sam. 19:25.) Mephibosheth explains the cause, by exposing the treachery of his servant Ziba. He rehearses the great kindness of the king to him, in taking up a dead man and setting him at the king's table; and declares that he cares not about the land, but for the king his benefactor. "Yea, let him (Ziba) take as, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house."

Love begets love. The gracious dealing of the king towards Mephibosheth has so won his heart, that all he cares for is to see the king restored to his house in peace. Such an one is worthy of a son's place at the king's table, whilst Ziba passes before us as a traitor to his master, and having only an eye to his own temporal advantage. The Spirit of Christ fills the one, the spirit of the world the other.

How affecting is all this as a type of the Church and Christ. He takes us up who were dead men, places us at His table as king's sons, restoring to us lost possessions. He, our beloved Master and Benefactor, is an exile from His throne and kingdom. We long for His return. We, like Mephibosheth, mourn His absence. The marks of our sorrow are upon us. But when our beloved Lord returns, we are ready to meet Him, to answer for our conduct during His absence, to show the tokens of our sorrow, and to hail His return with joy. If He speaks to us of possessions, we reply, we need no more than to see His face, and to be forever with Him.

The Field of the Slothful

“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. (Prov. 24:30, 31.)

WHEN we think of the wondrous mercy of God that has met us, and saved us, in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son, it is marvelous that we should ever need warning or exhortation to remind us that we are not our own, but bought with a price, and that therefore we should glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's. But so it is; and feeling our proneness to err, we often cry out with the Psalmist, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? ■by taking heed thereto according to Thy word.” Sometimes we find ourselves the subjects of carnal zeal and a spirit of self-confidence; at other times we are in danger of indifference to Christ's honor, carelessness as regards the state of our souls, the character of our walk, and the quality of our service. It is the latter condition that our Lord so solemnly warns us of, when He says, “While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” (Matt. 25:5.) Fearful falls and disappointment may be connected with fleshly energy, as we see in the case of Peter, but “slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep;” “by much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.” (Eccl. 10:18.) May we solemnly and prayerfully weigh these Scriptures before the Lord, and exhort one another to dedicate ourselves unreservedly to Him who has purchased us with His own blood, that when He comes again He may have to say to each one of us, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

There are many exhortations in the word of God to “be diligent,” to give “all diligence,” to “abound in diligence,” &c., and many solemn warnings against slothfulness. Among the characteristics of the latter, we may notice first, that the slothful soul hesitates to lay hold of the grace of God in Christ, and to live by the faith of the Son of God as its daily bread. “Be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land.” (Judg. 18:9.) A loss of relish for the flesh and blood of Christ, a lack of appetite for the sincere milk of the word, little inclination to draw nigh to God, slowness to apprehend our standing in grace as seated in Christ in heavenly places, are marks that indicate a slumbering and slothful state of soul.

Outward energy is only real when it is accompanied with secret fellowship with God. Spiritual affections, zeal, and intelligence, find their proper element only in the presence of God. There is nothing really spiritual apart from God. Those who do not abide in Christ, do not bring forth fruit. The very life and power of our souls is enjoying all the fullness the Father has given us in Christ. Let it not be said of us, then, “How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you?” (Josh. 18:3.) Our God is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6.) Dissatisfaction and want will be found in that bosom which is a stranger to the blessings connected with diligently searching the holy Scriptures, and obeying the word of the Lord. “An idle soul shall suffer hunger.” (Prov. 19:15.) Our God would have us to receive His word, hide His commandments with us, to incline our ear, and apply our heart to understanding, to cry

after knowledge, lift up our voice for understanding, seek her as silver, search for her as for hid treasures; then shall we understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. (Prov. 2).
“The soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” (Prov. 13:4.)

A spirit of bondage also is connected with slothfulness ■ “The slothful shall be under tribute.” (Prov. 12:24.) From the soul not dwelling in God, not living upon Christ, not feasting in the banqueting-house, there is no enjoyment of “the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” Men and things, therefore, have authority upon the heart, which rightly belongs only to Christ; hence their place is found in following in the train of good men, rather than in walking simply before the Lord, with an exercised conscience “in the sight of God the Father” ■ they are “under tribute,” instead of living as free-born citizens of heaven. To follow Paul only as he followed Christ is not being “under tribute,” but is true fellowship of saints; for they unitedly, and together, glorify God. “The hand of the diligent maketh rich.” (Prov. 10:4.)

Another mark of a slothful spirit is, that if the mind be occupied at all with the truth, it is satisfied with new discoveries, instead of feeding upon the truth, and being anxious that every fresh revelation should be sealed upon the heart. The mind only is exercised, and neither the affections nor the conscience acted upon. “The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting.” (Prov. 12:27.) Their pleasure is only in taking possession of what they sought after, and not in using it for personal refreshment and profit. The indolent man has had his desire gratified in obtaining what he wished, but he has no heart to treasure it up in his soul, to tide its sweetness, or to realize the strength and comfort it is able to minister. It is by patiently and perseveringly meditating upon the truth of God, mixing faith with it, and having it written upon our hearts and minds by the Spirit, that we find that scripture fulfilled in our experience. “Much increase is by the strength of the ox.” (Prov. 14:4.)

Great fear, self-consideration, and a desire for overrating difficulties, are further accompaniments of a slothful spirit. “The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.” (Prov. 22:13.) Those, however, who hearken to the Lord, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. (Prov. 1:33.) “The righteous are bold as a lion;” they know God is their refuge and strength. They trust in Him in whom is everlasting strength. Weakness, lack of divine energy, and pride, are also associated with a slothful spirit. “As a door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.” (Prov. 26:14-16.)

Now let us look at the “field of the slothful;” it is covered with weeds, and exposed to the intrusions of every hurtful foe—all grown over with thorns and nettles, and the atone wall thereof broken down. It is indeed a solemn picture, and may well serve to remind us that we are the Lord’s, and not of the world, even as He was not of the world; but, a chosen generation, a holy nation, and a peculiar people, and that our Lord looks for fruit. Naturally we only bring forth thorns and nettles; but God, in mercy, having united us to Him who is raised from the dead, given us the Holy Spirit, and separated us unto Himself by the blood of Jesus, it becomes us to be experimentally separate unto God, bearing much fruit. But, dear brethren, what is the state of our souls now? Are we fruitful in every good work, and diligent in keeping the stone wall from being broken down? The enemy desires ready access to us, and to our labor in the Lord; but if we are found living as separated

unto God by the blood and righteousness of His Son, we shall have an impenetrable shield round about us. When thus we are dwelling in God, we find we have something better than the world, and desire to be God's witnesses in separation from it, rather than to have the best associations with it. When the warming beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the fertilizing showers of divine grace, and the tender culturing hand of the heavenly Husbandman, are upon us, our souls prosper, and are ready to cry out, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits!"

Beloved in Christ! let us beware of slothfulness; let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labor of love in ministering to His saints. The cup of cold water, given in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward; the uplifted heart in prayer or praise does not escape His eye; and the tear of sympathy He will treasure up in His bottle.

On Luke 1

How beautifully does Luke 1 rise upon the heart! I read it like a new scene of light and joy, breaking in after a gloomy and wasted interval, and exceeding all that had been in the earlier days, or that had been promised by the prophets.

There had been most surely a return from Babylon in the times of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah—and they were good times. The zeal of the servants of God, the restoration of the house and city, the revived feasts, and the order and services of the people made them so. But such times had been clouded; the day was overcast; yea, while it was yet but morning, a change had come; and Malachi gives us an evil account of his times, in which condition, with a bright promise to the remnant, Israel goes on till the times of the New Testament. A dreary and evil interval indeed, without one single ray as from the light of the Lord, or the spirit of revelation, to animate or cheer it!

But, though it tarry, wait for it—it will surely come, and come with a bright witness. For such is this exquisite chapter. The morning breaks; the heavens are opened, as it were, and the dreary wastes of Israel are revisited. And, as in the twinkling of an eye, all this takes place. No special harbingers, no marvelous notices of the coming Stranger; but the priest is at the accustomed altar, and the people in their places according to the manner; and, in the ordinary current of every day life, the women of the land are preparing for espousals, (vs. 27,) when suddenly the heavens open, and visitations are made alike to the temple and the cottage, to the priest and the poor unknown virgin of Nazareth.

The suddenness and brilliancy of all this is very blessed. And how it tells us that the distance of heaven from earth is as nothing, when the due season comes for bringing them into communion. The ladder is a short one that will reach from heaven to earth by-and-bye; and in this chapter we get a sight of it for a moment, or a sample of some of its happy services. Here the angels of God are ascending and descending. Gabriel enters, without wrong, into the place of the priests, and stands even at the right side of the altar. He does not take the high style of the Angel-Jehovah, and ascend in its flame; nor does he, like Jesus-Jehovah, speak of himself as greater than that temple; but being a heavenly one, he enters without trespass upon the place of the priest. So also does he enter without reluctance into the place of the poor unknown Nazarene. The earth may not be so prepared to receive such visitations, as heaven is to make them, but Gabriel has for both Zacharias and Mary the same healing and gladdening word, “Fear not;” and joy, the most satisfying joy, diffuses itself everywhere. Old men and maidens, young men and children, join in the millennial dance. Mary and Elizabeth, and the child in the womb, and Zacharias, in their several way, attest their joy, and, in principle, all creation is lighted up in gladness. Here is more than earlier days had known, or voices of Prophets foretold. Ezra and Nehemiah had never had such days of heaven upon earth as these, nor had Malachi told the remnant of such tastes of soul-satisfying joy as Elizabeth had when she saluted Mary, or as Mary had when she uttered her song of praise.

He had indeed said, that they that feared the Lord spoke often one to the other, and thought on His name together; but now on the hearts and on the lips of such a remnant, the gladdening light of the Spirit is shed, and the triumphant strains of the Spirit are poured forth.

And the suddenness, as well as the brilliancy of all this! Who was calculating on a bit of it all through the day before?

And then the ease with which heaven visits the earth, when the due time comes. No reserve in coming side by side with the highest; no reluctance in coming side by side with the poorest and meanest. The ladder stretches its ample foot across the length and breadth of the land, and down to every point of it. "Abundant entrance" is administered to the angels in the heavens above.

All these features of this communion attract me. Would that the soul could wait more in the joy and patience of faith, for the great original of this, for that millennial day when the ladder shall thus be raised, and the heavens, after this pattern, shall open on the earth again, when the passage downward shall be thus in full ease and brilliancy; and if the receivers of the joy that is brought be made so happy by it, what shall be the happiness of them who bear it to them, and who, in their measure, shall experience the Divine prerogative, and know that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"?

Mark 5:33

WE may receive a benefit from one, and receive it too with all assurance of our welcome to it, and yet find ourselves very far from being at ease or at home in the presence of our benefactor. Nothing is more common than this. Gratitude may be awakened very deeply and affectionately in the heart, and yet reserve and uneasiness by no means be removed. And the higher the personal dignity, the deeper the moral worth of the one who has served us, the more will this reserve be felt. It calls for something beyond our mere assurance of his good-will towards us, and of our heartiest welcome to his services, to make us at ease before him. And this something is, I believe, our discovery that we have an interest in himself, as well as in his ability to oblige us.

This marks the experience of the woman in Mark 5. She knew the Lord's ability to relieve her sorrow, and her thorough welcome to avail herself of it. She, therefore, comes to take the virtue without the least reserve. But she is not prepared for more than this. She comes behind Him for the benefit, but she has not faith to come before Him. She knew her interest in His virtue, or power to relieve her, but nothing more.

The Lord, however, teaches her more. He teaches her that she has an interest in Himself also, in His Person. He calls her "daughter." He owns kindred or relationship with her. This was the communication which was fitted, alone fitted, to remove her fear and trembling, and to bring her from a place behind Him into His presence. Her rich and mighty Patron becomes her Kinsman. This is just what she wanted. This may bring her to feel ease with Him, as before she had got virtue from Him. This is something more than the love of gratitude for the benefit, or the love of delight and admiration for the grace and excellence that were in Him; it is the love of kindred, or the assurance of an interest in His person, and that gives ease. "Go in peace," therefore, said Jesus.

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