

GIRDLE OF TRUTH VOLUME 3

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A collection of articles and writings by W.H. Dorman from Girdle of Truth Volume 3, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

45 Chapters

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Girdle of Truth Volume 3

Adam

From whatever point the history of Adam is viewed it seems calculated to leave only an oppressive weight upon the mind. From his history the cloud in which his sin enveloped him never seems to pass away.

In him we see the height of creature happiness for a moment, followed by the continued sadness of one who kept not his first estate. Fallen from the place of authority and honor, and become the drudge of toil in exile from an =laborious paradise, his altered external circumstances presented a daily protest against his sin, and told him in daily reiterated language that none " can harden himself against God and prosper;" and " There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death!"

Alas! that man's biography should almost immediately begin with the history of his rebellion against the hand that had formed him in His image; and that, instead of the record of his gratitude and praise, we should read only of his distrust, with its bitter fruits, of the God whose goodness was poured around him on every hand. His happiness and honor are his own, but they spring from a bounty and goodness which he neither acts nor counsels. In the scene of enjoyment in which he is set he is but a quiescent receiver. His fortunes, his glory, his high estate, own nothing in the way of self-achievement. They are the spontaneous gifts of that God who gave him life, and blessed him, and called him to intercourse with Himself and set him over the works of His hands. He is created-blessed-set in authority -the tests of responsibility and life put before him-and what is the result? He is tempted-sins-and forfeits all!

Brief and passing is the bright picture of Adam's happiness, as the head of creation, in innocence and intercourse with God; though every feeling of his heart and nature then was that which God had directly implanted or which was awakened in his bosom by the knowledge of His goodness. Soon in the prosecution of his history far other scenes arise, and other objects and other thoughts arrest the mind.

In Adam and Cain sin is presented in its perfected forms: in Adam, sin against God; in Cain, sin against man in the image of God. Sin in Adam bore the stamp of distrust of God's goodness. Cain's sin is hatred of grace and of him who is the object of that grace. Both are seen in full character in man's hatred and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ: " They have seen and hated both me and my Father." In Abel and in Enoch, on the other hand, blessed be God, are presented the full and perfect redemption from sin by the power of divine grace. Abel is the first exemplar of righteousness by faith, now sin had destroyed man's innocence; Enoch presents the perfect triumph over death, as the consequence of sin; thus bringing into full relief "the hope of righteousness by faith."

But hope does not spring from any change wrought by grace in Adam, in his condition or his estate. In the ways of God "light arises in darkness;" but it is seen only as the eye is turned away from Adam to rest upon the mystic promise of "the woman's seed."

In the history of the first man, as the head of disobedience, whatever his personal sense of restoring mercy, we read in the broadest characters this solemn truth-which is yet the test of all true obedience and the basis of all real blessing-" Let God be true, but every man a liar!" For, be it observed, that the hope of redemption through "the seed of the woman" comes not to us through any promise made to Adam, as is sometimes wrongly assumed; nor does it present to us the unfolding of Adam's restoration, who never regains his first estate. It is rather his utter setting aside as the keeper of others' fortunes, or the depository of others' blessings, who had so signally ruined his own. In him we see sin dealt with directly by the Lord, and consequences attached to it, in the government of the world, of which every age affords its attestations, while it leaves the solution of the enigma, of an almost universal scene of corruption, and misery, and death, in a world which a God of goodness made and rules, for the history before us to supply-inexplicable on any ground but that which revelation here unfolds.

The chief elements of Adam's moral discipline, as it appears, are to be found in the history of God's dealing with his sin, which the third chapter of Genesis presents; and it is in this scene alone that we find any direct intimations of his intercourse with God after the fall.

There was, doubtless, restored intercourse, but it is unnoticed in the word, because another lesson is impressed on his history, by the wisdom of God, than that which Abel's, or Enoch's, or Noah's presents. It marks the omissions of scripture to be as striking as its declarations, that, whatever may be inferred, nothing is stated concerning Adam's salvation and restoration to God. Nothing is said about the reality of his faith; neither is it anywhere stated, as of Enoch and others, that "he walked with God." There is no attestation, as in the case of Abel, that " he was righteous," on the only ground of righteousness, for man, now sin had come in; but he takes his place in scripture after the fall only as the progenitor of a race involved in the ruin of his sin, and as the head of disobedience in contrast with Christ, the obedient one. He carries with him through the world the consciousness that he had sinned away everything and that recovery was utterly beyond his power. He is never seen in any sense as one who was trusted anew. He begets sons and daughters, and at length dies; but the effects of God's dealings on his soul can be little gathered from any direct statements of the divine word:

The reason of this is plain, and not a little instructive to us.

The distinctive principle of God's dealings with Adam appears to have been to impress upon him a deep and lasting conviction of the truth and certainty of all that he had distrusted, the absence of which had been the occasion of his fall. Hence his exile from paradise, his preclusion from the tree of life, the sterility of the earth and his consequent incessant toil, the throes of childbirth which he is obliged to witness, as the race is increased, and finally, his familiarity with death before he himself is absolutely its victim, are all arrayed in evidence of the truth of the character of that God whom he had distrusted and disobeyed; while in Cain he sees sin suddenly ripening and assuming another shape, and telling his terror-stricken soul that the heart once uplifted in rebellion against God, but prepares for the murderous uplifting of the arm against all that bears the stamp of His image and favor in man. What pregnancy does this thought give to the simple statement of a later revelation-" This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also!" It is the law of the divine nature, in opposition to the corrupted nature of man. It is not, however, in Adam's history, but in the unfolding of grace in the promise of the woman's seed, that

the traducings of the enemy are met, and the God who was maligned as grudging to man the easy gifts of His creative bounty, is seen to have so loved as to give His only-begotten Son.

But we have said that the elements of Adam's future discipline were lodged in his soul, while God was dealing with his primeval sin. And first as to temptation, or the source and spring of evil in man; he was practically taught that truth which is given to us in the way of precept, but which received its embodiment and illustration in Adam's living experience, " Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil,' neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." Then how effectually does he learn the folly of his aspirations after knowledge apart from God, in order to raise his condition or gratify his pride, when he sees that their only issue, as to himself, is a discovery of his own nakedness! " Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked." As to guilt, also, he learns from his own hasty retreat to a hiding-place, amongst the trees of the garden, that man under its power instinctively flees from the presence of God, even before divine justice expels him thence; while the echo of that terrible question, " Where art thou?" continually reminds him that there is no darkness nor secret place where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves that the Lord will not see them. And further, the reason he gives for his fear-" I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself "-, is his own acknowledgment of the worthlessness of his fig-leaf coverings, when once the presence of the Lord is reached, whatever their estimation may have been in his own eyes or the eyes of others apart from that presence. And lastly, " Who told thee that thou wast naked?" makes him sadly aware of an inward voice unheard before, and reveals to him the birth-time and birth-place of conscience, henceforward, to be his companion and the inward witness of his sin.

But there is the other side of the question to be considered in his experience, and the effects of discipline on his soul. In his history we may note his entire submission to God, whether in the judgment of his sin, or in its terrible consequences, and the altered condition to which, by it, he is reduced. From this subjection -which is the first mark of grace-nothing in his subsequent history leads us to believe he swerved. As a sinner, he submits himself to the judgment of God. He consents to be set aside himself, and to look to the woman as the divinely appointed channel of life. He himself "calls his wife's name EVE, because she is-the mother of all living." He refuses not the coats of skins which divine goodness provides as a covering for them, instead of the aprons of fig-leaves, the work of their own hands. He rebels not against his expulsion from paradise, but submits to the toil which his sin had brought in, nor seeks to turn aside the edge of the curse. In his after-history we do not find him, like Cain, building cities, or engaging in any worldly enterprises, but submissively pursuing his toilsome path, until his earthly course is done. That he participated in the disappointed hopes of Eve, in the birth and after-history of Cain and Abel, there seems but little room to question; but the divine appointment of Seth in Abel's place is noticed as meeting the full recognition of his heart; and then his history is closed with the brief statement that "The days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years and he died."

Nothing is more calculated profoundly to impress the mind with the eternal truth of God and of His word than the thoughtful contemplation of Adam's history. If we look, no farther than to the government of this world, as exhibiting the consequences of his sin, how do the records of six thousand years bear witness that not one word of all that God has spoken, as to these

consequences, has fallen to the ground! And who, with this record in his mind, can fail to be impressed with its attestations, as they start up in his daily pathway, in the labor, and toil, and misery, and death, which abound and increase on every hand? And who, without this history, could have conceived or predicted that such consequences, and so lasting, could by possibility have hung upon a single step in departure from subjection to that word'?

Aphorisms

Faith in the body uses the power that is in the Head. It is the province of faith to recognize what is in Him, and to act upon it.

If our hearts are not constantly reckoning on the present love and power of Jesus to be exercised towards us, the memory of the past will never help us; for memory is not faith.

Faith is a present dependence on God.

Whatever faith looks to Christ for, faith will get.

We use the goodness of God today: to-morrow comes, and We throw ourselves back on our own resources through unbelief.

An Ear to Hear

I would note what a great thing it is to have an ear to hear. It was the grand mark of distinction between the corrupt mass of Israel and the true followers of Jesus. And Rev. 2 and 3 show us that it is still the distinguishing feature between the dead and the living.

Surely it is the gift of God. " Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." But, like every other gift, we must prize it if we would enjoy it. " To you that hear shall more be given." Now the subtlety of Satan is seen in this, that he seeks in every way possible to steal the ear from God. He well knows that if he can but get our ear, he has access to the heart; that if we but enter into temptation we have no power to resist it. Moreover, we are no match for his wiles. Eve listened, and she was undone. Now it is not merely positive error that is seductive: everything that is not Christ, everything that is not linked with Christ, everything into which I enter without Christ, tends to draw away from Him. If I listen, without Him, I have no power to judge or to exclude the lying vanity which would draw away from Him. If I open my ear to what is not of God, His word will lose its place and power, and I shall judge by the sight of my eyes and the hearing of my ears. " When the woman saw that the tree was good for food," &c., the word of God lost its hold over her heart, and she became a prey to the deceitfulness of sin.

O the divine wisdom of shutting the ear to the ten thousand vanities which would steal the ear from Christ, and divert us from walking as partakers of the heavenly calling! And everything that is of man -- science, politics, literature, amusement-will thus divert. Everything that occupies the heart -without Christ is an abomination which maketh a lie. It corrupts the affections from Him. What is of the world keeps in the world. If called to a thing by Christ, He will be with me and keep me in it; but whatever I am connected with else will drag me down into death. Hence the great blessing of having an honest calling in which we can serve the Lord Christ; and the danger of those who have " fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness," and who strengthen not the hands of the poor and the needy. The house may be swept and garnished, but it is empty; and if Christ is not in, there is no power to keep Satan out.

Hence the unspeakable preciousness of the word of God. Coming from God, it leads to God. By it He gave us life at the first, and by it He nourishes the life He has given. Nothing else can feed the new man. It is by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God that man lives. If it abides in us, we shall abide in the Father and in the Son. It will maintain the soul in known communion in the midst of seduction all around and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. For there we find Jesus the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested Unto us. It is the mirror in which His glory is reflected: and beholding in this glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image. Thus is Christ formed in us in truth and power.

Now nothing will compensate for this personal fellowship with Jesus in the word. However profitable the gleanings of others may be when led by the Spirit, nothing can make up for individual conscious communion with Christ Himself through the word. Alas! that our hearts could live a day without it. How lovely is this in the song! The Bride cannot do without her Beloved. He is

everything to her. It is true she is slothful at one time, and at another secure; but she has no other Beloved. And When she has for a moment lost Him or grieved Him away, there is no rest until she finds Him again-" Him whom her soul loveth." It is these living affections towards the Lord Jesus which we so much need. And it is by the revelation of His towards us in the word that they are begotten, and when there, satisfied. Then precious to our souls are the words of His lips,-more precious than gold and silver, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

Here comes in the great importance of an ear to hear. "For doth not Wisdom cry, and Understanding put forth her voice?" But where is the opened ear? The Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." And He has said, in that same 8th of Proverbs, " Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For he that findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord." (Comp. John 20:31.)

God grant to us, as the earth drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it from heaven, so to thirst for His precious word, that we may know Him, and grow up into Him in all things.

Earth and Heaven

Psalm 73

What a difference there is between being on the earth and in heaven! In Luke 15 we get it for a sinner; it is the far country or the Father's house. Here we get it for a saint.

In the beginning of the Psalm, all his judgments are astray, for his heart has got on the poor things of earth. " I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.... They are not in trouble, as other men; neither are they plagued like other men."

And herein is seen the deceitfulness of riches -they detain the thoughts and affections on earth. What are they in heaven? What is the estimate there of everything in which man, as man, can boast? God writes death on him and on them. (See Psa. 49) Being in heaven enables us to put the true estimate on earth and everything in it. The only true use of riches is to use them for God. Every other use will make a man carnal, but this will lead the affections heavenward, whilst being to God's glory. Matt. 6:19-21: "Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also."

See how the light bursts in upon him when he gets into the sanctuary! Instead of judging God and His ways, (as in verse 13,) he now judges himself; and he abhors himself in His presence. "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." But immediately he adds, " Nevertheless, I am continually with thee." In the joy of restoration he blesses the grace that was deeper than all his failure. Here we have no long process, as some prescribe, but the heart finds God in all the fullness of His grace, when it turns to Him in truth-when the will is broken, the soul finds rest. "A little faith goes further than a great many tears." But in truth, restoration is God's work. "He restoreth my soul." When his foot was slipping, it was His mercy that held him up.

Now, God gets His place, and there is light upon everything. The joy of relationship with Him liberates the soul, and everything else fades in His presence. "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." His flesh and his heart fail, but God is the strength of his heart, and his one and eternal portion.

The love of Christ to His Church and to sinners is the very element in which spiritual joy lives and thrives. There may be knowledge and service, but if the love of Christ is not sensibly the moving spring, there will not be edification. "Knowledge puffeth up" him who has it, " but love edifieth " those to whom it ministers. I have always found rest, however troubled before, when in the fellowship of Christ's love to His people, however feebly enjoyed.

If I fall back into the life of nature, and live it and feed it, I shall also fall back into its responsibilities, and get troubled about past sins and present corruption-and rightly so-troubled so as to have a guilty conscience, and pro as not to feel separated in spirit from the whole thing. Only "as alive from the dead" can I know or enjoy the freedom wherewith Christ makes free; and this is entered into by faith, and maintained by fellowship with Jesus. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) But in order to this fellowship, obedience is essential. (See John 15) "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love." Hence, devotedness to Christ, hearty hearing of His voice, and following Him, is the very element in which the new man enjoys the liberty of resurrection. It is liberty from sin unto God.

There is danger in putting the girdle off. While it is on, we are braced for service and happy, but when some service is over, there is often a feeling of weariness, it may be of the body; but the danger is in letting the mind too slip down into nature for rest. It is a great thing in resting to have Christ with us. The "rest" of the disciples after their mission was to be with Him and one another. "Come and rest awhile." If I seek rest in reading the word, or prayer, or singing, or visiting the poor, or fellowship in person or by letter with the saints, it will but strengthen for God; but if in self-indulgence, it will open the door for Satan and the world. "Being let go, they went to their own company."

It is a great thing to minister what the soul is fed with by God. It may be but one thought, but then it is the channel between Christ and the soul. The Christ who feeds one can feed a thousand. Moreover it is in breaking the bread that it is multiplied, not before it is broken. It is not many thoughts that make a good meal for the soul, but Christ ministered; and a little in the spirit goes a great way-joy is ministered and strength.

Satan seeks either to give confidence apart from Christ, or to hinder from confidence in Christ. He well knows that if a soul is looking to Jesus, he has no power over it, and so cannot use it for his own end; nay, that such an one has power over him.

The great thing is to remember that we are nothing, God is all, and to consent to it. There is no trouble or anxiety then, for there is only God for it; and more, the heart seeking only His glory, can count upon Him to maintain it. His will is ours, and we do not want things to be otherwise; but inasmuch as He is active in His love in the scene that is, even so are we, through His grace, and then we find rest.

Christ did not come to be occupied with the ten thousand vanities filling the hearts and minds of poor sinners down here; but He came from His Father's bosom, to tell out all His Father's love, that He might occupy their hearts with the joys of the Father's presence. "If thou knewest " was ever on His lips. It is in this spirit alone that we can rightly pass through the world; our own hearts preoccupied with the sense of His loveliness and grace, and so unattracted by all that glitters here, longing to attract away from these things to Him who alone is lovely.

It was in this spirit that Paul went to Corinth. Jews required a sign, and Greeks sought wisdom, but he brought neither the one nor the other; he preached Christ crucified. He well knew that Christ crucified was to the Jews a scandal and to the Greeks foolishness; but he also knew that to the called, the same Christ was the power of God and the wisdom of God. Therefore he determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ, and Him (as) crucified.

The Eternal Life

1 John 2

In, a former paper (vol. ii. p. 1,) I took up the priesthood of Christ; I now take up again the subject in this chapter, that is, the communication of divine life from the Father Himself in the Person of the Son, who comes down on earth, and by Him it is communicated to us. There, that is, in the Person of the Son, is the manifestation of all we ought to be, and a test by which we may prove what is of Christ, and detect that which is not. The greater part of the New Testament Scripture, the Epistles, owes its origin to the mischief Satan did in the Church. The mischief was only permitted that the folly of those things which corrupt might be made manifest, that the full glory of the truth might be brought out. " These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.' The things here written of are what some pretenders held. They were persons of the highest pretensions who would seduce them. Not the Gospels, of course, but the great body of the Epistles, of which those to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Galatians are examples, were occasioned by the mischief the adversary brought in. In Corinthians he attacked the resurrection; in Thessalonians the coming of the Lord; in Galatians justification by faith. Philippians is an exception, because there Paul was comforted by their love. It is the same in regard to the mischief he has done from the beginning. The fall itself is the occasion of God's introducing greater blessing than before. Whatever Satan seeks to do must ultimately tend to the divine glory, as it has done from the beginning, and to the comfort and blessing of our souls who seek to serve God. Of course man gets humbled in it, but God overrules it for greater good. If we turn to Christ's rejection by the Jews, it brings out the Church. Though he wept over Jerusalem, the energy of Satan being there exhibited against the Lord Himself, so He said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour." "For I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He looked with sorrow at the evil, but it was the occasion of infinite blessing. Thus by his rejection was the greatest blessing brought out, for if Jesus had not died, we had not been saved; and though Satan thought he had triumphed over him by the cross, God raised Him from the dead. So, whatever Satan does, it always results in the bringing out, on God's part, of greater blessing. And so it is in our day; we find man spoiling that which had been committed to him, and God bringing in something much better. And what do we find in the chapter before us? Antichrist was going on, and it led to the bringing out of the workings of divine life; it is the occasion in God's hands of bringing into greater blessing them that trust Him. The history from the beginning is just that; and so it will be to the end, until Satan is cast into the burning lake of fire and brimstone. It will be then to bring in heavenly blessing.

The power of divine life first manifested in Christ is then manifested in us. We shall see the instructions He gave, guiding us by His precepts according to His life. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." It is not said so to be, because we have sin, and He had none; but so to walk. "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Here we get a very important principle of the divine life, what is our life, and whence its source.

There are two parts of the manifestation of the divine life-what He was in His own person down here, and now that He is exalted, what He manifests through and in us of the divine life.

First, Christ is the source of it for us, "The Word was made flesh," &c.; second, the manifestation through and in us. We can correct every estimate we form of our lives, because we have the perfect and wonderful model of it in Christ Himself, who is the power of it. He is the very eternal life that was with the Father, and He has given us that eternal life. I am speaking of Him before He was the Creator, as

shown in John's Gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him," &c. He was eternally with God before He created. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and it is added, "of his fullness have we all received." Two things are here, first, "the Word was made flesh, &c. and we beheld his glory." As also in Hebrews, "The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; 'the image of the invisible God," as in Colossians; the perfect representation of what God "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." We get in His Person the life itself that was with the Father from the beginning. He was the life; it was in Him. Now, it is never said, eternal life is in us; it is in Him; but it is given to us. That is a different thing. He Himself is our life, He has life in Himself. "God has given to us eternal life, and that life is in his Son;" but the Son has life in, Himself. My hand is alive, but my life is not in my hand. My hand lives by virtue of its union with my body. Take it off, and I shall live still. So the Church, or an individual soul, lives by virtue of its union to Christ, the Head.

Secondly, when Christ was down here, all his instructions were the expressions of this life. It was not like a commandment given by the law, because the law exacted from man what was becoming and what man ought to be in relation to God. It took the responsibility that attached to man's character, as man, and did not go beyond it. But we get in Christ the Manifestation of what God was to man; love acting in the midst of evil. It was no part of the law to love sinners, but it was a part of the Lord. He Came down to love. Again in all His thoughts and tones of feeling for us, He went far beyond the mere letter of the law. The law could not say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that must arise from an estimate of God. The law could not say, "Blessed are the peacemakers;" Christ Himself was the Prince of peace, showing there was peace to be made. So the duties. There was a spirituality in the law beyond what we see, but there was a power of good in Christ that went beyond the evil. The law never manifested power over evil in the shape of love. There was manifested in Christ the power of good over evil; and that was Christ's life. We get in all His actions the character and expression of what God was in man when on earth, and it is that that is so lovely. He was the eternal life with the Father.

John the Baptist, who was next to Christ and immediately preceded Him, of whom the Lord testified, "of them that are born of women, there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist," came in a way of righteousness, and therefore went away from men altogether-was in the desert, kept no company with any, was a herald before Christ to announce Him, had nothing to say to any, ate locusts and wild honey. But God, being the person that was offended, could come in grace near to them, and speak to them in the spirit of grace, which rises above and overrides the evil, and expresses what God is; and they said, "Never man spake like this man." Then it is said, "He went about doing good." In Him was found the activity of good, the suffering for righteousness'

sake, the exercise of love.

There is another thing which specially characterizes the divine life of Christ, the discernment of it in those who possess this life, the power of discerning the spirit of life in another.

It has been said, there requires much grace in oneself to discern little grace in another. There is an attractive power in grace which recognizes the Spirit of Christ in another. He could say, "Forasmuch as this man also is a child of Abraham." There was that which attracted in Christ. The moment a Christian recognizes divine life in another, in spite of difference, education, rank, and many other things, he will be drawn towards him. It is characteristic; he cannot help it. The moment a man discerns the Spirit of Christ in another, there is a necessary attraction to it. At once they are united together in love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The instant the spirit and character of Christ is manifested, there is necessarily an attraction where the Spirit of Christ is. "He went about doing good." Then there is a blessed discernment of the traits of it; it is discerning Christ. "Love your enemies," that was manifest in Christ as a man. "If ye love those that love you, what thank have you." You must be above your enemies, and love those that are good for nothing. In Christ, we see God coming down and manifesting this life in a man on the earth, so as to attract towards Him, and bring into His presence in rest. "As I have loved you, ye ought also to love one another." "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." He overcometh evil with good. You must do as God does, love your enemies. It was that which proved Him to be God in that He could love that in which there was nothing loveable. In God, the spring of love is from Himself; but we need something to attract us. I am referring to the primary revelation, that which was from the beginning. And however much we may go on, we must come back after all to it. It is always perfect, because it is God Himself who is manifested. You never can bring me to anything where God was manifested, but to the living word of Christ, or the written Word of Scripture. We have only to ask, is it that which you have had from the beginning? If not, it is "evil seducers." If it is "that which we have had from the beginning," that is God, that must test everything, and that is the character of the word. Bring a sinner opposite to the word, and you learn what he is, as in the case of the poor Samaritan woman. The written word is the manifestation of Christ, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. A man cannot judge God's word without judging himself. If he judges it wrong he is judged himself. "He that believeth not is condemned already." He is incapable of seeing that Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and the word judges himself. You may talk about colors or light to a blind man, but if a man is blind he will not understand you. It is his non-perception of light and colors that proves he is blind. It must be so where God is manifested. If I am incapable of discerning what manifests Christ, and the word does not reach my soul, it is that which judges me. "The word which I speak, the same shall judge him in the last day." All God's ways now are presenting His moral manifestation. It will next be His judicial manifestation, if the moral manifestation is not received. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day." The Lord did not accompany the word with judgment when it was spoken, but the word will judge him at the last day, and he will be condemned. Man still is proved by the word, and that is the profit of preaching. It brings out the sentence in that day of all the precepts He is displaying now. Antichrist will only bring out by God's judicial action towards him what He has taught all the way through. Antichrist will be brought out in full display, and God has to show what He is, and to act towards him in that character. The first way God taught them was in the Lord Jesus Christ, "whom ye with wicked

hands have taken and slain." Being rejected, and having ascended up on high, and become the expression of what we should be, the Church should be the manifestation of what Christ is. Then comes the communication of the life from Him in heaven. This was a new thing. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." It was not a new commandment, it was an old commandment, and yet new, because it was now given in the power of it, being not merely commanded in His word, but communicated by the power of the Holy Ghost to reproduce in us the life of Christ, and that is a new thing, and we are to manifest it. The Church of God is to be the vessel for the manifestation of Christ down here, according to the power of its Head in heaven.

God acted in government towards Israel when He dwelt in thick darkness. He acted in government according to a known law, but He was hid behind a veil; He set bounds about the mount. But now when Christ died, the darkness was passed in the cross, and there was a full display of the holiness of God. At the same moment His wrath burst forth, which fully manifested His character. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." The veil is rent, and we can now enter into the presence of God Himself, into the holiest, which is opened to us., "Walk in the light, as God is in the light." "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." "If ye walk in the light, as God is in the light." Nothing is to be allowed that cannot bear the light. My fellowship is with light. Men perish for lack of knowledge. They are alienated from the life of God, which is the spirit of sin. "The true light now shineth," by Christ's death. He ascended up on high; the veil is rent; God is fully manifested in truth and love. If He had been just only, we should have perished: if He had been love only, there would have been no justice: but there was justice and holiness with love, and God has been glorified about our sins in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The light is now shining. Christ, the source of that light, is to be manifested in us, "which thing is true in him and in you." It is an old commandment which was from the beginning, Christ Himself. You cannot have a better than that. And now the manifestation of it is learned in us; and if we want it as a test, it must not be the imperfect light that is in us, but in Christ Himself. While it is given to us as the means of detecting these errors, it is also to build us up in what Christ is. In looking at these traits, we discover more and more that it is thoroughly divine. I learn in Christ such and such a trait of perfectness, and I say that is God manifest in the flesh, and thus I learn all I shall know in heaven. You have seen the Father. We learn the beauty in Jesus, and learn it is divine; and learning what God is, we are happy and peaceful. And if you have seen a saint dying, if he has apprehended the blood of Christ, he will have peace; but if you look for joy, it must spring from the affections being acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. You will sometimes see a saint, and there is joy, and by and by his peace is gone. That is where the soul is not settled. There ought to be both. The blood gives peace, but it is my acquaintance with and knowledge of Christ that gives me joy.

"He that says he is in Christ and hateth his brother." The apostle always speaks of the abstract principle. "He that loveth his brother." "He that is born of God cannot commit sin." "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." If he stumble at Christ it is his own fault. We ought never to be a stumbling-block through not being like Christ. There is no greater snare than the fear of offending, and no greater sin than the fear of offending. If Christ is the offense, if it is Christ that offends, the offense of the cross has not ceased. You will never please the world with the cross of Christ. If I am walking in perfect love, my love will flow out to others. If I have the ' affection in myself, I shall love my brother, and shall not stumble. If I am not walking in love of the brethren, I am going all crooked myself. I may rebuke, Christ did that; but

if the desire to do them good is not in me, I am going crooked myself, I have not the spirit of Christ.

(Ver. 12.) "I write unto you children," not little children, but all saints, "because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." That was a settled thing. You are not Christians at all if your sins are not forgiven you. The poor jailer wanted salvation, and that is what he got. He cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" That is what he wanted. If I come to hear the testimony of God, what I want is to be saved, to get life. Nicodemus came by night, with his questions. The Lord said, "You must be born again." "He that is in Christ is a new creature." The jailer did not know what being in Christ meant, but he believed. What is the consequence? He was saved, saved by a work that was accomplished before he ever asked to be saved. Believing in Christ, he was saved, he got eternal life. That is what he got. If the light gets into the souls of sinners, they cannot be happy until they have peace with God. This is the difficulty now as to Christians having peace. Before Christianity became a profession in the world, a Christian was counted and understood to be saved; but now all pretend to be Christians, and they who really are so want to know if they are true Christians, whereby the simple fact of redemption is very much lost sight of. "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." God's judgment is passed already on your sins in Christ. If I look to Christ to be saved, as bearing my sins, His judgment is, you have eternal life. That is just as much the judgment of God, as if Christ had pronounced it on the great white throne. He knows the value of the work of His Son; He is judge, and not you.

"I write unto you, little children." He can add a great deal to the little children, but to the fathers he has only one thing to say, "you have known him that is from the beginning." Whatever else it might be, it ends all in this, "known him that is from the beginning," that is Christ. If anything is brought to me that is not Christ, I reject it. If I know a person, it is himself that I know. I am to know that my sins are forgiven me for His name's sake, but I am to know him that was from the beginning also. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." What is the object of all this knowledge of Christ? All the promises are in Christ. He is the object of the Father's delight. The apostle distinguishes growth. The fathers have known Christ from the beginning, the true Christ. That guards the soul, knowing Him perfectly. There is no ambiguity, no uncertainty, and all the exercises and experiences of the Christian, which are often so much dwelt on are but the scaffolding of the soul to get at this, "known him that is from the beginning."

The young Christian is full of the joy, and is thus taken up with himself; whereas the old Christian speaks less about the joy, but says, it is Christ Himself possessed makes me happy. His heart trusts in the Lord; the things of the world, even the things of the Church, do not disturb him. He counts on the love ever watchful and certain in its eye, and is not afraid at any evil tidings. He knows, though heaven and earth were to dissolve and crumble into pieces, and the Church itself, which is impossible, His throne remains. There is a steadiness in the man's soul, because he knows Him that is from the beginning; knows a manifested Christ: one whom he bath looked upon with his eyes, and his hands have handled. He was speaking of a Christ he had known, and seen, and handled, and which was from the beginning, and says, there is the Father's character, and he has nothing to add. How far have your souls found steady rest in Christ? or how far are they satisfied with Christ? Forsaken of friends, are you stilt satisfied with Him? or how far are there things that you crave and have to resist? Have you done with the world? Not as tired of its vanities and wearied with its pleasures, but because your souls have found something in Christ that satisfies for all. Is He found such a manifestation of God to your souls that you rest in Him, having

found such a richness in Christ that the soul is satisfied so as not to want other things? Then if you have, you can say, " none of these things move me."

The two points to young men and children are, first, that they have over-'come the wicked one, the prince of this world; secondly, that they have known the Father, through believing in Christ, and have known the spirit of adoption, and no doubt of the Father's love. The young men overcoming the wicked one is connected with their having the word of God abiding in them, and overcoming the world. "Love not the world," &c.

Then the little children are warned against the seductions of false doctrines, &c. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

I would remark that which especially characterizes the young men is conflict with the world. And if we would be satisfied with the knowledge of Him that is from the beginning, there must be overcoming the world. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." If the soul is to grow up into Christ in all things, there must be the giving up of the world. " They are not of the world." May we see the excellency of Christ, and so know, in the ways of that lowly man, the full expression, unfolding, and manifestation of the character of God, that our hearts may be knit to Him, and then, when we shall see Him face to face, "we shall know even as we are known."

The Exercise of Conscience and the Exercise of Heart: or, the Whale and the Gourd

The first great question between a man's soul and God is the question of sin. Man's natural conscience (without revelation) tells him that there is a distance between him and God on account of sin; nay, Adam spontaneously took the place of distance, his conscience having demanded it and coerced him to it. Until this sense of distance be removed, and the conscience be satisfied that the cause of it no longer exists, man cannot recognize any happy relationship between himself and God, whatever he may apprehend of the perfection and excellence of a Divine Being. Nay, the more he does apprehend of these attributes, the more consciously distant is he as to relationship, because the more does he feel the moral disparity. Hence the relieving of the conscience is the ground-work of all blessing; and whenever there is imperfection in it, the value of the relationship which God has established between Himself and us is depreciated; so that in fact knowledge of God (even true spiritual knowledge) is prejudicial to the soul, if the conscience be weakly or imperfectly relieved.

Few are perhaps aware how their failure and feebleness are attributable to an unsettled conscience. We cannot stand at a distance and really learn God in love. If God meets me in love, He must meet me where I feel I am-estranged from Him; i.e., in my sin. My conscience tells me this, and the first action of His love must be to assure me that the question of sin is settled, and that the sense of distance need not, should not, any longer exist; nay more, that I now glorify God by being happy in the relief and assurance which He offers me, as to the removal of my sin through atonement.

This is God's first great lesson to the soul; and the more truly I learn it, the better do I understand the love that reaches me as I am; and as I learn the virtues of that love in my necessity and distance, so am I the better able to analyze its fine and perfect lines of interest for me now no longer in distance but in nearness.

Again, the will is never broken till conscience is tranquillized in God's presence. Man has done with his own judgment, and with the will which seeks it, when he has found relief in the judgment of God, to which his own will would never have led him. The soul must pass through a great exercise sooner or later, ere it finds out that, condemned by all human judgment, with God alone there is no condemnation. It must be brought into acquaintance with the depth and horror of sin, either in practice or in the more secret but not less harrowing conviction of it within; for not until the conscience is sensible of impending ruin, and at the same moment feels that in God alone there is succor, can man render himself heartily to God.

The soul must be brought to a sense of danger and despair ere it so appreciate the succor as to be wholly cast on Him. But this is what God so entirely desires; for this is what evinces the completeness of our dependence and total reversion of that independence which estranged man from God. It was the one uniform expression of the life and ways of Christ on earth, and, as a

crowning evidence of His success over all the adverse powers acting on humanity, the one justly condemned of man and of himself, the malefactor, on the cross, looked to Him for remembrance and provision in the kingdom. What could anything in creation do for him? Within, without, on every side, in the present and the future, danger and anguish were before him. In such a juncture he finds God absolutely for him, and so much so, that to be absolutely for himself, he must be absolutely for God. That the conscience should learn this rest in God is the alone ground-work of peace and service; consequently, the more a soul advances in the repose of the one and the activities of the other, the more deeply must it be educated in the need and value of God's relief.

Jonah, though a servant of God had, not yet passed through this great exercise of conscience: he had not learned to relinquish self and its judgment and to depend alone on God. He was pursuing the leadings of his own will; but God arrests him in his course, and his dormant conscience is awakened when apparently about to perish. The trembling jailer draws his sword to kill himself; Peter beseeches the Lord to depart from him, for he was a "sinful man," and so Jonah is consigned to the fate his conscience now approves, in the midst of the foaming waves. Then God provides the whale to rescue and to exercise him, the substance of which exercise we have in the second chapter of the book of Jonah. The sum of it is simply this, he learns in this last extreme of human exigence, that God alone is his resource. He cries, "I will look again to thy holy temple."

Doubtless, he had looked before, but now brought to a deeper sense of the fearful consequences of pursuing his own will, he looks again with an appreciation proportionate to the need to which that will had reduced him; this was requisite to make him attentive and interested in the counsels of God. The more he abandons himself and clings to God, the more really he serves himself; and as God is his blessing, so the service of God is now necessarily his interest. I repeat necessarily, because if my soul finds that all my blessing is from God, all my interests must be connected with God; and to serve Him and be occupied with His interests must follow when all my interests are bound up in Him.

The same truth is taught in Psa. 51 where David regards his sin only in the light of God; and finding relief from his burdened conscience, he passes from the exercise into renewed occupation with the interests of God. His prayer, "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," indicates that being relieved of personal trouble and self, he finds his thoughts and interests flowing in the channel of the counsels of God. God at one and the same time relieves the conscience, and forms a servant with a ready and obedient ear. Nor otherwise can such an one be produced; ' for thus alone can the will of man, which the conscience witnesses against, be set aside; and if not set aside, there is very little obedient service; and if not obedient, not according to God. "Fear not," from the lips of Christ, relieved Peter's conscience, and enabled him to forsake all, and follow the one who had pronounced it. Jonah's time in the whale is just this. When the burdened conscience can find relief in nothing but Christ, (the holy temple); and in so doing, dwells more on His exceeding excellence and grace than even on the condition that required it, (for the greater always occupies the mind, to the exclusion of the less,) and when the soul is full of magnifying the Lord, the frailty and weakness of the earthen vessel is lost sight of. Thus He can do all His will, and we are only clay in His hand.

To Jonah, now in the ease of a relieved conscience, can the Lord say, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." The ear is opened, and Jonah arises in the strength and purpose of service, as did Paul,

who, arrested in the recklessness of his course, cries out in the presence of Jesus and of glory, "What wilt thou have me to do?" How could I serve happily, or with interest, if I did not know the value of God's blessing to myself? The Lord Jesus enunciated this truth on the eve of His departure from this world, by His self-imposed service to His own whom He loved. Having washed their feet, and pronounced them clean, He says, "Ye should do as I have done to you." The verity and vigor of this service of Christ to ourselves prepares us for the service of others, so that deficiency in power to serve, or in guidance in serving, is traceable to a deficiency in our apprehension of this first and foremost act of Christ's love, and every advance in power or intelligence must rest on this ground-work. That this process of exercise often occurs, and always with renewed blessing, is very well known; but I believe that in addition to these constant and necessary reminders of how dependent we are on the grace of God; we are, according to the service required of us, made, at some time or other, to pass a season in "the whale," to learn that subjection to the Lord, with which the wisdom of His counsels had not hitherto impressed us. This is properly the exercise of conscience as known in the whale's belly.

But this is not all. After the conscience is relieved, and obedience is learned by dependence on God, another trial is necessary, which is the exercise of the heart. The very fact of a relieved conscience affords a scope for the affections to enjoy the mercies given us by God. And again, the very sovereignty of God under which our wills have been subdued may warp our judgment and lead us to expect an unsparing rule from God, as if power in grace only characterized Him, and not love in its tenderest and most long-suffering emotions. Thus was it with Jonah. He is angry at the long-suffering love of God which spared the city and belied his prophetic preaching; he cannot understand it; and thus he has to learn the lesson of "the gourd;" and, by the blighting and disappointment of - his own heart, to comprehend what are the tender sympathies of God's heart. Abraham learned a very different lesson in the surrender of Isaac, from what all the commotions about Ishmael and the consequences of his sojourn in Egypt entailed. In one sense, the latter had a sting in them which the former had not; his conscience, no doubt, whispered how deserved was the sorrow in the one case, but in the other it was the test whether his heart rested more in God or in the gift of God; and whether he could at the demand of God surrender every claim on his affections and find in God his entire resource. Jacob, in like manner, suffered very differently from the vexations in Laban's house (which his conscience must have regarded as retributive) from what he did in the bereavement and trial to his affections in the disappearance of Joseph. Conscience was not concerned with the latter, but his heart was most deeply. Thus also with David. The loss of Ziklag was essentially different from the loss of Jerusalem. In the former there was, no doubt, much to exercise his conscience. Ziklag, in the Philistine country, was his retreat in the hour of his unbelief, which God consequently broke up, in order (by making him feel on the brink of ruin as he was, then deserted by his oldest followers, and the purpose of stoning debated among them) in order, I say, to cast him more entirely on God, and the trial of his conscience effects this end. He encourages himself in the Lord his God, which is a prelude to bolder, fuller, and more intelligent service, as we see in his subsequent history. But the surrender of Jerusalem was very different; there his heart was more immediately touched. Jerusalem was God's greatest gift to him, his most valued reward for all his difficulties and achievements, the pinnacle of his desire-godly desire: but he must surrender it before the fierce and deadly rebellion of his own son. The dearest ties of his heart are severed, and his only door of hope is the thought of God's delight in him. Doubtless, as Jerusalem and all its attractions sank behind this temporary cloud, God and

His everlasting sympathies thronged the horizon of his soul. God will exercise both the heart and conscience; and we may find souls who have had their consciences very truly exercised, who from want of exercise of heart, know very little of the sympathies of Christ. The exercise of the conscience is the groundwork of service, but that of the heart is the great preparation for suitable service. A good soldier will implicitly obey orders, but the servant of the Lord must be something more. He is an ambassador for Christ, and must serve in the spirit and tenderness in which Christ served. But this is only learned when it is needed. If I have no bereavement or loss, I cannot understand properly what bereavement or loss is. Hence, the Lord, when He has us in His hand, ' when He is using us, brings the heart low by many an exercise; one object after another has to be relinquished; God thereby molding us for Himself and for service, and teaching us to find in Him that real engagement for our hearts, which the fleeting objects here, without Him cannot accord. There was no sorrow which did not wrench the tender chords of Christ's heart, when on earth, and by exercising our hearts He leads us into fellowship with Him, and feels that we can now be, as it were, on the same note with Him. If to the broken spirit, the exercised and relieved conscience He declares His will, to the broken and contrite heart does He reveal Himself, making known His own feelings, and mingling with our cup the sympathies of His own heart.

All this is taught in the gourd! Jonah cannot understand or sympathize with the tenderness of God, and therefore he must learn, through suffering, his own need of that tenderness. A gourd is granted him, so suited to his need that his hasty nature subsides into contentment and enjoyment, and this being so, the gourd, the object that yielded him this satisfaction and enjoyment, is removed! Doubtless no agony in the whale's belly exceeded this. The gourd was God's own gift, prepared by Him, and therefore allowable to be enjoyed. The trial of its removal, however was not, in one sense, accompanied with the sense of justice, with which the former exercise must have been. That was in order to break his will, by condemning him of wrong and exercising him about it; this was to reach his heart in order to teach him God's heart and prepare him for the revelations of God's feelings and sympathies. Jonah is now brought to silence-he has not a word to reply. There is no opening the mouth under the overwhelming sense of, "Thou didst it," as the Psalmist expresses it. But however bitter these exercises may be, when God's object and purpose is wrought by them, they are blessed, for they leave us alone with God. The conscience has found in Him its full and true relief, and the heart having learned His sympathies, is afraid to look abroad on earth for satisfaction. It may be brought to silence, but if nigh unto God, it will be listening unto Him.

Faith Working by Love

Galatians 5:6

The world cast out the Son of God in the day of His tender, personal diligent love, waiting, as He was, on all the need and sorrow that were around Him. For His love they were His enemies. They took, also, the occasion which His humiliation afforded them, (a humiliation assumed for the salvation of sinners,) to cast reproach and indignity upon Him. "When He came," as another has said, "to reconcile, to display, the tenderness of His sympathetic love, then nothing would, do but they must get rid of God. When He comes into the very midst of the sufferings and woes of a world lying in wickedness, they refuse to have Him. They used the opportunity of His humiliation, to heap indignity and scorn upon Him."

If this were so with the children of men, if this were what the Lord of life and glory had to find in the world, the faith which apprehended Him (workmanship of His own Spirit) was the more grateful to Him. And we have good reason to know that it was so-blessed be His name. He not only relieved the need that was brought to him, but He took: delight in the faith that brought it.

That faith, however, distinguished itself differently. It worked by different passions of the soul. It worked at times, I may say, as by a spirit of reverence, at times as by a spirit of liberty. For it was not only that the Lord met instances of strong faith, or of weak faith; He met faith having very different characteristics in its approaches and appeals to Him.

For instance, it was forward in the company that brought their palsied friend to Him; it was reserved in the woman who touched Him in the crowd. In Bartimaeus, it was marked by a strong, unquestioning apprehension of grace; in the centurion it worked by a worshipping apprehension of His personal glory. Bartimaeus knew Him in the grace of the Son of David, who was to make the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and he would cry, and cry again, and make his sorrow to utter itself aloud in the ear of Jesus, in spite of the multitude. The centurion, on the other hand, judged himself unworthy to approach Him, and his house unworthy to receive Him; and would scarcely allow his sorrow to be heard above the measure which necessity put upon it.

Here surely was a difference. The one was all forwardness, knowing the grace of Christ; the other all reverence and reserve, knowing His personal glory. And yet we cannot say which was the more acceptable to Him. Each of them, with like sureness and readiness, gets the blessing he needed; and evident it is, from the whole style of the narratives, that He was refreshed by the faith of each, though it made its approach and appeal in so different a spirit.

And we see this diversity among the saints now. The spirit of reverence, like the centurion's reserve, prevails in some, the spirit of liberty, like the boldness of Bartimaeus, in others. We, through infirmity, may misunderstand one another, because of such differences; but happy is it to see that the Lord, after this manner, can and does appreciate each and all.

But if faith thus worked in the presence of Christ in His day, it had worked by other passions of the soul before that day. " By faith, Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." The word to which Noah listened and which he received was such as naturally awakened fear. Faith in it worked by fear: it brought solemn tidings to his ear, and fear of God and of His word was the fruit of faith.

Rahab tells the spies of Joshua that what her nation had heard of the doings of the God of Israel for His people had caused a panic, and she, believing the tidings, received the spies. This was another instance of faith working by fear.

All this is so. A spirit of reverence, a spirit of liberty, fear, and other passions may be the form of that power in the soul which faith works by. But the apostle speaks to us of love, as being the due power by which it now works. As he says, " Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."

If faith, at this day, take up fear, it has taken up its wrong instrument. The Lord can comfort the feeble mind, and meet the tremblings and uncertainties of the heart; but let us confess them as unworthy of His grace in Christ Jesus. He would be sullyng the brightness of His own way, if He could admit that faith in Him could work by fear. God apprehended, as I His glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ, must inspire confidence and liberty; and that is faith working by love. The Epistle to the Galatians reads for us the title of faith to work in this way. The Son of God. has borne the curse of the law that we might get the blessing of God. The Son of God was made under the law, that we might be brought from under it into the adoption and liberty of children. Confidence, liberty, the conscience and heart at ease, love answering love, must be the fruit of faith in such facts as these. It is, therefore, but the conclusion of all this to say, that " in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love."

But I must add a little on the fruit both in the soul and in the life of this fine principle, this "faith which worketh by love. And here I say, what a difference between blessedness and religiousness! The Galatians passed from the first to the second. Sad, dishonorable journey! In their first estate, they would have plucked out their eyes for Paul, the witness and minister of Christ among them, just because they were so happy in Christ. In their second estate, Paul stands in doubt of them, and fears they might, through biting and devouring, go on to consume one another. They had become much more religious than when he had known them before; but they had lost their blessedness. They were observing days and months and times and years; but where were the eyes that were once ready to be plucked out for others?

What a difference! And so at this day. Souls we know who are in the sweet personal enjoyment of Christ, and by which they gain a state of strength and victory; while the whole scene around us bears witness of the easy natural combination of religiousness and worldliness; of the observance of ordinances, and yet of full subjection to the course of this present evil world.

Now, "faith that worketh by love" is the spring or parent of this state of "blessedness," of which we are speaking, and which the apostle describes in Gal. 4:15, " Where is then the blessedness ye spoke of; for I bare you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."

The apostle himself, as the same epistle shows us, had experienced this same blessedness. When he first received the gospel, he went down to Arabia; for he needed not Jerusalem or apostles, or anything that all could do for him or give him; he had his treasure with him, the Son was revealed in him. So afterward at Antioch, he did not fear. Peter: the creature, however honored or above him in some sense, did not command him; his happy spirit was feeding on the love of the Son of God." (See chaps. i. and ii.)

These are touches of the spirit of the apostle, indicating indeed that state of "blessedness" which waits on the "faith that worketh by love."

The Hebrew saints give us another sample of the same. In the day of their illumination or quickening, they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and became the willing companions of them who suffered and were reproached for Christ's sake. The Church at Jerusalem in Acts 2 shows us the same. The saints there were together, and had all things common. No man called anything he had his own. They ate their bread with gladness, praising God. And so the eunuch in Acts 8 He went on his way rejoicing, able to lose Philip, because he had found Christ. Surely these knew the "blessedness" of the "faith that worketh by love." But time would fail us to tell of all such cases then those days, and now in our days- blessed be God for it!

Faith's Answer

1 Kings 18:41-46

The great blessing of faith is that it links our souls with God. It is a secret Communication, establishing relations of confidence and repose between the earth and God. Faith exists unknown to any one but its possessor and God. It shows its vitality by works, but its vitality is its enjoyment, and not its power of demonstrating itself.

The history of its action is an interesting, instructive study. Dependence on God, or faith, is the first element of our new life, the great antagonistic principle of the old nature. " Whatever is not of faith is sin" is the abstract rule of life. My will, in nature, being errant, all my power, natural or acquired, acts so as to sustain what is wrong, that is, my natural will. Well! but now as quickened by the life of Christ into the sensibilities of His nature, I am constantly finding that difficulties occur to me, all the greater because my will runs counter to God's will. Nay more, I find that many new desires are awakened within me, which I have no power in nature to gratify. In both these cases I learn that I must lean on God; and as I lean-and I know what is His mind' or intention towards me-so have I faith or confidence in Him about any' given result.

It is evident we know too little of this blessed sentiment, and this arises from our great self-dependence. Whether it be as regards difficulties in our path unsurmounted, or good desires ungratified, we do not lean sufficiently on the Lord, and have not the sweet and invigorating consciousness of His direct assistance in supplying our need. We are constantly helped by His mercy and providence, and though we may then recognize His hand and thank Him, yet this is not walking in faith. Faith, I repeat, is the great principle of life. I open my eyes, confident that I shall see; if I did not it would be a great marvel to me: and every demand that my natural mind makes on me assumes that my life and strength are equal to that demand, and will accord it. So likewise with living faith. My difficulties and desires are before the Lord. I know they are, and I know that He is the true source of help; and as I make demand on Him, I know the amount which he will render to me according to my sense of His ability as engaged for me. A man who rightly knows his own powers would never tax them beyond their ability, wisely ordered, but so far as he feels their ability, he can tax them to the utmost; and this is faith. It is then a secret conviction, known only to myself, of God's grace towards me. I rest in it: my heart is strengthened and blessed by it. There is nothing so blessed as to understand that faith is an individual secret between our souls and God-that God who gave His Son for us. This is always the proof to us of what His heart is, for no other blessing could ever establish us before Him as this does.

Now then, seeing that faith is an individual secret, how comes it that so many desire that what is so close, personal, solemn, and divine, should be proved as having existed by evidences that will convince the crowd? Your secret exists, and you cannot explain it, and you ought not: it is too sacred, and yet you wish that the public should know that this sacred confidence has produced certain results in a very distinguished manner. That there will be results there can be no question perfect results, accurate according to the demand you made, and (as I have said) to your sense of

God's ability as engaged for you; but that the results or answer should be to any one outside the range of the necessity, I cannot and must not expect. Suppose I entrust my difficulties or desires to a human friend, who I am sure will co-operate with me and relieve me; is it necessary that in doing so he must publish his assistance and service? By no means. If he has convinced me of it, no matter how he accorded it, he has assured the affection and confidence

Which reckoned on him; and this we desire from a friend far more than that others should acknowledge what he has done. God in His love wants to reveal Himself to our souls, and if He answers our faith so as to make us feel that it is He alone that has done it, He cares not for the publication of it. Nay more, He will often make it of very insignificant appearance, in order that the soul may be kept in the blessing of the secret assurance of faith, which will progress, step by step, with the evidence, if the evidence is not too great to make faith no longer necessary. The moment we are in sight we are out of faith. God could never desire to put us outside faith now; hence, even in answering our faith, He so answers it that we want it in a moment again, even while enjoying the result. He cannot distinguish man as man, but He loves man and will make man depending on Him to FEEL it; consequently, in order to keep the soul in full blessing, the Lord must keep it in faith; and if He communicates to my own heart the answer to my faith, He has done all I have required of Him. The apostle Paul knew God's love and power in the answer which he received to his faith in the salvation of the crew, (Acts 27) though to human eye it was a sorry provision and a scrambling escape to save 276 souls, "some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship."

But what matter how man judged, if the heart of the apostle had its secret confidence responded to? If he knew that the power of God had interposed for him, he was not careful that others should know more than the result. In the passage before us, 1 Kings 18:41-46, which is referred to in James 6 as an exposition of "effectual, fervent prayer," we find, first, the faith which can say to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a noise of abundance of rain." Faith cometh by hearing; the intimation had reached the prophet; he had heard the sound thereof; he had the secret consciousness in his soul that he was drawing on the abilities of God to meet the case; and he could speak of what that power would accomplish, though as yet he had no more intimation of it than a "sound." No one understood this "sound" but himself, neither could he communicate it to another, although he could speak of the effect. This conviction the soul obtains in communion with God. It is but a conviction—a "sound;" but yet it is the warrant to the soul, knowing the strength and grace it rests on, to expect an amount of relief commensurate with its reliance on them. In a word, it is resting on the strength offered me by God, and my soul receives the conviction of what that power can and will do. Elijah can without hesitation propose to the king to "get up, eat and drink," in the assured hope of rain. But what is his own course? He retires to the top of Carmel, casts himself upon the earth, and puts his face between his knees. This teaches us the edition of a believing soul. It has the intimation of the coming blessing, it can speak of it. But this does not lead to indifference or indolence; nay; rather, the soul, burdened by the wondrous reality of trusting God, is engrossed with the subject the more as it approaches fulfillment. According to the exhortation in Col. 4:2, it "continues in prayer and watches in the same," &c., being quite awake to the manifestations of fulfillment. The prophet sends his servant to look toward the sea, but there is nothing to be seen at first. The word is, "Go again seven times:" prayer and watching must be perfect. "And it came to pass the seventh time, that he (the servant) said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." Could there possibly be a smaller indication of

coming rain? A cloud the size of a man's hand is hardly visible on the horizon. What patience to send seven times! What carefulness of observation to discern anything so insignificant, and after all to learn so little! But faith wanted no more; the soul rested in God, and only prayed and watched till demonstration was granted; and at the smallest notice, the heart was entirely assured; and the prophet tells Ahab, Prepare thy chariot; get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." Thus are we instructed in the nature of the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," i.e., one seeking to go rightly. No one can lean on God to be sustained in wrong; but to be sustained in, and strengthened for, what is right, is not only to be expected, but it is sin if we seek relief otherwise; because we must, in that case, be leaning on something besides God, and what we lean on we magnify.

In conclusion, we require, first, Faith (or the secret conviction of help from God) to invigorate the soul with a sense of the ability which is engaged for it.

Secondly, the praying, wakeful condition of soul which is conscious of the solemn-blessing vouchsafed to it until the moment of fulfillment comes.

Lastly, not to seek great or pompous evidences of the fulfillment, but with the true sensibility of affection to interpret the smallest notification, because the more intimate any one is with another, the sooner and easier will they understand their simplest gestures and promptings.

The Lord give us grace to enter into the life of the One blessed man down here, ever leaning on God, ever sensible in Himself of the sweet consciousness that He could count on the abilities of God. " Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always:" and this is the Blessed One who lives for us, and whose life is ours with all its susceptibilities, "to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Fragment

The word at the opening of John is, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." And it struck me yesterday, how very blessedly all the cases in that gospel illustrate this, and show us, that all who were called to Jesus, received from Him a spirit of liberty and strength; not the spirit of bondage or of fear, but such a spirit as became those who had the power or the privilege to become the sons of God.

I trace this throughout, and will show you what I mean, that you may judge it in the exercise of your own spiritual senses, or the mind of Christ in you.

Andrew spends the remnant of a day in the unknown, solitary dwelling of Christ, but he leaves it in a spirit of full liberty, for he finds his brother Simon, and at once, as out of the abundance of his heart, bears witness of his new-found joy.

Philip, in like spirit comes forth after he had been called by Jesus, and tells Nathanael of Jesus, as Andrew had told Simon.

These may be minute features or traces of the mind that was in these earliest disciples, but they tell the secret of the heart very clearly. We find the spirit of liberty, such as became sons and not servants, to be in them.

Nathanael appears next to Philip. He had been under the fig-tree, I surely judge, under such convictions and visitations of soul as had separated him, [as conviction always does (Zech. 3)-] but being brought to Jesus, and addressed by Jesus, his soul rises from the place of conviction to that of admiration and worship-he is full of Christ, and not as before, of himself, and out of the abundance of his heart speaks of His glories.

The Samaritan is seen issuing forth from the simple homestead, so to speak, or the scene of the duties and occupations of every-day domestic life. She does not come, like Nathanael, from the place that had witnessed religious exercise of conscience, she is simply a careless child of nature, or a citizen of the world, a dweller in this defiled earth of ours. But she meets the One whom Nathanael had met, and she leaves Him, in the bright sunny freedom of a delivered heart, to tell all her neighbors, like Andrew and Philip, of her new-found joy; and her neighbors catching the joy, in their turn, like Nathanael, have their mouths, by the abundance of their hearts, opened to speak of Jesus, and of Jesus and His glories only.

All is of a piece in these cases, and how precious to you and me, that we may take our place in so happy a group; and if we taste not an overflowing cup, it is because we are straightened in our own bowels. But further.

Peter, in his turn, witnesses the same. The multitude had receded from the Son of God. (A sample of His condition in this divine gospel, for Israel had refused Him, and the world. He made had disowned Him.) But all alone as He was, He appealed to the twelve. He turned to them, as much as to say, I am left a solitary one on the earth-will you also give me up? Peter, in depth of affection,

(affection inwrought in His spirit by grateful recollection of all he owed the Lord,) answers that He was more to Him than the whole creation of God, his eternal life, and that he knew Him to be so.

No questionable or challenged blessing, no fear or suspicion, as if he knew not the air he was breathing or the place he was filling, but his spirit owns eternal, life, and eternal life for himself, in the blessed Son of God. (chap. 6.)

The convicted adulteress, then, continues the same tale of the wonders wrought out for the soul by the receiving of the Son of God. She is seen under the fiery hill. She is not merely as a child of nature, just come forth from the scene of domestic duties like the Samaritan, or even from the place of conviction or the laborings of a troubled conscience like Nathanael, but, detected, convicted, exposed, she is dragged under the very thunders and fire of the righteous burning mount, and there she lies ready for judgment. She can say nothing, and she does not attempt it. Jesus, the Lord of the hill, whose hand alone could hold and guide its thunders, pleads her cause, and so pleads it, as to divert the lightning from her head to the head of her accusers, and they are forced from the ground. But how is she? Is she any longer at the foot of the fiery hill? When Jesus and she are alone and together, what is the frame of her spirit? What fills her? The spirit of bondage, or the glory that is full of grace and truth? She can stand His presence though in her scarlet sin, and she is dismissed in the fullness of forgiveness. The "light of life" sent her away in peace.

The blind beggar comes after her, and suited witness of like grace he is, and in due season follows the convicted sinner. He is found in the place where the thunders of the Church had put him, a terrible place to nature; none more so. The adulteress was under mount Sinai when Jesus met her, but this poor Israelite is outside the camp. The one was condemned by the law, the other was cast out by that which called itself the Church. And I may say, nature, or flesh and blood, the heart of ignorant, religious man will as deeply quail before the last as before the first. It is a place terrible to the natural mind. But again, I ask, what does that place become to this poor outcast? Is it to him any longer the place of an outcast? Was the presence of Christ a place of condemnation to the sinner of chap. viii? Is that same presence a place of separation, the place of a heathen man and a publican to this poor Jew? Receiving the Son of God, he worships. His spirit is in a sanctuary. It is at liberty. It is in heaven. It has entered the temple with thank-offerings, and peace-offerings, and sacrifices of praise. He is not on praying ground surely, but at an eucharistic feast. He worships as those only can who know the presence of the Son of God in its redeeming, healing, peaceful virtue.

What secrets-what tales of the heart are told in these simple narratives-what pulses of the hidden spirit are felt here! Every case exhibits, in those who had received Jesus, a spirit not of fear, but of liberty. But I only, as it were, suggest, having, however, tasted that this is a goodly theme. I do not instance Nicodemus of chap. 3 because he does not illustrate one who had received the Son of God. He did at the end, I am sure, but not in chap. 3.

Fragment

We may be assured of this, that the throwing of everything on interpretation is the token, that the power of conscience for the end of nearness to God and obedience to the will of the Father is in a sick and faint and weak state. The love of Christ is superior to knowledge; but such a course, and

one so little according to the Lord's mind, gives the superior place to knowledge; and if knowledge do not subserve the end of advancement in grace, we have lost the cross, and it can serve but an earthly end, as it often is of an earthly character, intellectual and high-minded.

Fragment

We want to have the eye more set' on the glory, beloved. It is necessarily hidden as yet, but it is real, waiting for its appointed hour to shine out. It tried, whether the earth were in a fit state to let it shine, but it found it otherwise. Indeed all the great things of God have assayed man and the earth, and got no suited answer. Righteousness addressed man's heart in the law. The voice that called man to repentance spoke in man's ear by the Baptist. Grace 'would fain have softened and drawn man in the ministry of the Son from the bosom. But nothing of God found its answer in man.

Fragments

Mark 14:3-9

Is there not something analogous going on now?-a readiness to object to service done to the person of Christ, as if the energies thus employed were wasted, and should have been spent on the poor-a talk of philanthropy which would hinder from breaking the box on Jesus. It is much easier to give to the poor than to spend our affections on the person of Jesus. Mere nature could be careful and troubled about many things; but nature will never sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His words. It can trouble the house with the importance of its service, but will never fill it with the odor of the ointment.

Note, too, how affection to the person of Christ guides to the right sort of service, even when there is not positive intelligence as to it. The fact is, it is this affection to Christ's person that keeps people right.

Fragments

After all, the grand secret of making happy is being happy. If the love of God is flowing into me, the love of God will be flowing out from me. It is quite true that if I am hungering and thirsting, God will fill me. But hungering and thirsting after a thing is not the flowing forth of it from me to others. Moreover, if I have not settled peace in my conscience, there cannot be this outflow, for there is nothing to flow.

But one may say, Are we never to hunger and thirst again? No, never, as if we had not already that which satisfies. So Christ says, " He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." " Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." A well of water springing up is not hungering and thirsting. It is not that I shall not desire more of the enjoyment, but it is like a child who has got something very good. I have got the well of living water in me. It is not thirsting after a thing that I have not. I have got the Holy Ghost. Having the Holy Ghost, I am brought into connection with that which is infinite, so I can never thirst, for I am in connection with it, that is, I am in connection with God. But just because I am in connection with it, the taste of it awakens desire for more, and it being infinite, there is no cessation in the flowing in. I am ever thirsting but never thirsty.

People think it a wonderful attainment to be able to say with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." But, in truth, it is the lowest possible ground for a Christian to be on. It is owning that he had gone on so badly, that if man were to judge, there would be no ground to speak for him at all; and it is appealing to the omniscience of the Lord as his only refuge. His eye could see that there was love at the bottom of Peter's heart when nobody else could see it there. Then we have marvelous grace immediately after; for, having broken down his confidence in himself, he trusts him with the thing that was dearest to him; "Feed my sheep."

The Glory a Moral Test

Isaiah 6

It is amazing how little the minds of Christians entertain any thoughts about what the present judgment of the Lord may be as to their individual or collective estate. Generally speaking, all questions are merged in the one of final, individual salvation; as if to believe, so as to get to heaven, answered all the ends of God's glory and Christ's redemption. As to any practical acquaintance with the judgments of the Lord, in their moral bearing, everything is left in a vague and undefined way, to what another world and the final awards of eternity may disclose. " But the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, bath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:11-13.) That is, the believer being set between the manifestation of God's infinite grace, in the appearing of Christ, for the accomplishment of redemption, and His coming again in glory, is `called to have his whole moral being in this world in conformity with these termini (or limits) of his course. Every motive and desire should bear the stamp either of the cross or the glory. For if God's end in grace, as it has been said, "is to gather companions for Jesus in the glory," His object with them, as to this world is, that their character, and aims, and position, should be a witness of this, before the glory is revealed. As it was said of Israel, "ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."

Now, nothing appears to be more simple than the application of the light of scripture to the moral condition of individual, or collective associations of believers, to determine whether it is in accordance with God's thoughts or not.

In this vision of the glory of the Lord, the practical application to Israel's moral condition is simple and direct; and it affords, also, a principle of universal application -namely, that the moral condition Of the heirs of the glory ought to answer, in this world, to the glory to which they are destined; and to be thus the reflex of the character of the God of glory. But this point is not left to the application of a general principle. In the first chapter of the book of Revelation, there is a similar vision to the one we are considering, of Christ's glory, in its bearing on the moral condition of the Church, as set to be Christ's witness on the earth. In this vision Christ appears to John, not as the accomplisher of redemption, nor as the High Priest of our profession in His office of un failing intercession, (not that these have practically ceased,) but in the glory which belongs to Him as " the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Or, in other words, it is Christ as He is about to appear in the display and vindication (and application, too, in judgment on the earth) of that glory of which the Church ought to have been the witness. In application, therefore, the addresses to the Churches are, in effect, the sentence of apostasy, as in Isaiah, beginning with the charge to Ephesus of having forsaken its first love, and ending in utter rejection in Laodicea, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." But it is not intended now to pursue this farther than as it is an illustration, in reference to the responsibility of the Church, of the principle of the

vision before us in Isaiah; for it is manifest that the condition of the churches is judged of by their accordance, or otherwise, with the glory of Him who was seen by John in vision.

In our chapter the glory of Jehovah is manifested to the prophet as the glory of Him with whom Israel was associated (in name at least), and through whom it was to be manifested in all the earth. Consequently, it at once becomes the test of the moral condition of the people; for God's glory has ever its own moral character of holiness attached to it. Hence the prophet says, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." And when grace comes in personally to the prophet, as symbolized by the touching of his lips with the live coal from off the altar, it is only to make him the herald of Israel's apostate condition. He said, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat; and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." But this is not an arbitrary and unconnected message, any more than the glory is a mere majestic breaking in. of God on the prophet's mind, to inspire him with awe. For the display of this glory was necessary to afford (if I may so speak) the standard of admeasurement of Israel's apostasy, or departure from the Lord. He might, indeed, have said, as in Jeremiah, with regard to their forgetful unbelief of their signal redemption from Egypt, to which they owed their existence as a nation, "neither said they, where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt," &c., but He here gauges their departure from another point,—their unfitness to be the witnesses of His glory. Their departure from the Lord in both respects was manifest, for they had failed to maintain their position in the redemption which had been already accomplished, and they were unfit to be the vessel of the display of the glory with which they were nominally associated. For how is it that Israel saw not this glory? It was but Jehovah judging from His sanctuary. And if the bright radiance of His throne was not always, as now, manifest, still He was ever the "Holy, holy, holy Jehovah of Hosts;" and His glory could never be associated with that which was inconsistent with its moral character of holiness. But the sentence of the prophet, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not," &c., is but the moral reflex of the glory, as it throws its detecting beams upon the condition of the people that are professedly in connection with it. They neither see nor hear, nor can they be the medium of its display; but judgment must waste the nation until it leaves only a small remnant, or "the holy seed as the substance thereof." "The kingdom of God must be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Then, "he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called Holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." (Isa. 4:3, 4.)

But in truth everything is, and everything must be, estimated by its accordance or otherwise with this glory. If it be the question of sin, it is "all have sinned and come short Of the glory of God." If of divine mercy, it is "vessels of mercy, whom God hath afore prepared unto glory." If of heavenly hope, it is "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." If of final earthly purpose, it is "As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory."

In the case of Israel, the subsequent dealings of the Lord have confirmed the sentence of apostasy, on the nation, which came forth from the glory, as well as brought on them the

judgments threatened in the neglected warnings of the prophets. For alas! they knew not the day of their merciful visitation when He, of whose glory Isaiah spoke, the Christ, the Jehovah of Israel, was manifested in grace among them; and now their " house is left unto them desolate." And in the case of the professing body now, the failure which began in apostolic days, will end in a total rejection, by the Lord, of the Church, viewed in its character of earthly witness, as utterly distant from accordance with the glory of Him by which everything that bears His name must be tried. As to individuals (as in the case of the prophet) there is the personal application of grace, and with it, if viewed aright, the sense of general departure, relieved only by the hope and expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus to take His heavenly Church to Himself ere He is manifested in glory; when there will be the execution of judgment upon that especially which falsely bears His name. But the habit, even of Christians, of estimating the importance or otherwise of all truth by its bearing on individual salvation, neutralizes almost every moral consideration drawn from the glory of God. But surely it must lead to wrong conclusions, if I make my own safety or well-being the center of all my thoughts, when the center of all God's counsels is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He it was who " humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also bath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the rather."

But can there be a stronger proof of unfitness in the body that bears Christ's name to witness for His glory, or to enter into that glory, than the way in which the hope of His coming is lost sight of? To the mass His coming has only the aspect of judgment instead of joy and hope: so entirely has everything changed since it was said of believers that they were "looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ," and "waiting for God's Son from heaven!"

God Visiting His People

In this part of the gospel of Luke, the Lord Jesus enters on His work and the character in which he presented Himself before men. His ministry was, of course, in Israel, still in the wide sense it was before men. It is not here the work which He did, His service and preaching, as the proof of His mission; nor is it the doctrine of His divine nature, as presented in the gospel of John; but it is what He was revealed as man, filled with the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. It is the Lord Jesus presenting Himself to man as God visiting His people; and this not only in the glory of His person, but being filled with the Holy Ghost as man. Man, in his deep misery, needed Him, and the Lord Jesus came, as the vessel of divine power, revealing God in grace in the midst of the scene of Satan's power. He had been owned as God's Son, and filled with the Holy Ghost; and now, after having overcome Satan in all his temptations in the wilderness, (for "the devil, having ended all his temptations, departed from him for a season,") he returned in the power of the Spirit, and taking his place with the remnant in Israel, we see Him going about in the perfect power of the Holy Ghost, and as man overcoming evil (free Himself), thus manifesting the power of God in man.

Now this is not promise, neither is it doctrine; though both are most right and precious in their place; but it is the accomplishment of promise in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

It is the Lord Himself coming into the evil, and manifesting perfect grace and perfect power. This He ever does for us, although there is a change in the working of it out, since He has gone up for us into the glory. It is a very different thing to have promises, and to have Him in whom the promises are accomplished.

It is indeed a great thing to have promises: they are most precious as blowing up the fire of our faith; but they are not the object round which our affections can gather. But round the person of Christ they can. That blessed center gathers round itself from the evil of this world, and awakens by the revelation of all His grace, hopes, desires, and affections, which find no rest but in Himself: delivering us from this present evil world by His divine power.

He came to Nazareth, where He was known, and read in the synagogue out of the prophet Isaiah, where it is written, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon ME, because he hath anointed ME to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted," and so on; and then "He closed the book and sat down, and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began to say unto them this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." "The promise was in scripture, but this day it is fulfilled in myself. Here it is, it is I myself. And if promise has awakened any hopes and desires in your souls, in my person alone will be the fulfillment of them; for the fulfillment of the promise is in ME." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME; he hath anointed ME," &c. &c. Here was perfect, unmingled grace.

In Isaiah there had been various pleadings and calls for repentance, (see chap. 59:1-16,) and in the midst of "all this comes forth this PERSON. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon ME." (chap. 61.) It is a person, not a promise, and therefore deliverance and unmingled blessing. The person

of the Lord Jesus having come in, who is the link of blessing, and perfect, unmingled grace, we hear no more of judgment, except to clear away the oppression of the enemy. God's love having been made manifest in the appearing of Jesus, it was "the acceptable year of the Lord," because the person of Jesus was there. Therefore in this 4th of Luke He says nothing about "the day of vengeance of our God," because that was not yet come, the Church having to be gathered first. Christ is always true in Himself, in His person; but no doctrine, nor promise can give us Christ Himself as present with us. The Lord may have to chastise us, but whenever He presents Himself to our souls, His person gives perfect peace. It is this perfect grace and perfect blessing that subdues and gives us lowliness of heart, gentleness of spirit, and quietness in the midst of trouble. Suppose the world is going on badly, Christ is not going on badly; if the Church has failed, Christ has not failed; so then my heart is in perfect peace. Christ says, "Here am I;" and if He is here, everything is at His charge. Let "the day of vengeance," or what will come, if I possess Himself, all is perfect peace, for in the person of Christ we get everlasting life. It will be thus in the millennium, and it is this that gives the blessedness of the 145th Psalm-Christ being the blessed-mess in Himself. But now Christ is here for the sorrowful, the poor, the lame, the blind, the halt; for their souls find in their very wants the key to unbounded blessing and unmingled grace. The moment their eyes gazed on His blessed Person they got what they wanted. He came in the midst of sinners to bring in perfect grace.

But now He goes on to show the way in which grace will be received by nature. There was no perception of it after all that they had witnessed; for they say "Is not this Joseph's son?" The Father had said of Him, "This is my beloved Son," "and all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth." Then was the Son of man sowing the word and it touched them, for it was adapted to their need, and there is nothing so intelligent as a want. You will never satisfy a hungry man by explaining to him what bread is; he wants the bread itself. But not apprehending the one who can alone meet the want, the heart does not find its rest. Not laying hold on Christ, through the unbelief of their hearts, they wonder at His words and say, "Is not this Joseph's son?" "And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician heal thyself. Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." As he says in another scripture, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Thus the Lord, in effect, says, If I come as a man, I cannot do any mighty works, because of the unbelieving heart of man, who will only account me as a man, because he looks only on the out-aid. "Is not this Joseph's son?"

But there was a sense in which the power of God would work, and show that sovereign grace would outstrip and over-step these bounds of mere nature, and go where sin and misery needed Him, even to the widow of Sarepta. But when this grace of His heart is intimated, they were filled with wrath, and would have cast the Lord down the hill-hating the grace that would act in sovereign goodness. For if man cannot have God in his own way, and on his own terms, his pride is wounded, and he will not have God at all. Because the natural heart, not looking beyond the surface, cannot bear God to go beyond, in His grace, the limits of their narrow thoughts. Nevertheless, all this does not hinder the Lord from showing that grace has power in itself, and adapts itself to bring in all the deliverance needed by poor, guilty, lost man. And in the 34th verse, we see the very demons knew who the Lord was, and what He was about; for these demons knew

full well that He was not "Joseph's son" to them. "Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. It is man only who is dull and stupid; for these demons knew who and what He was, when man, to whom all this grace is adapted, was ignorant of Him.

But grace does not stop because of man's malice. Satan was holding man captive, and Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and he came out of the man, and hurt him not. And it is blessed to see that but one single word of this blessed One will drive Satan away; a proof of His grace and power towards man, and of a power not to be resisted acting on these demons. He is God, I need not say; but here it is power in the vessel, man. This was not a doctrine nor a promise merely; He Himself was there in living power as man. As man, and Son of God, too, He came amongst us in all our misery and ruin. This is, indeed, "goodwill to men." What a deliverance! We may not have yet fully known it, it may be, still there it is for faith to rest upon; all His power is for me. It is not simply in God, but He comes and interests Himself in man, as man; and we have always the love and the power which interests itself for is and in us. This is unchangeably true, although it now works in a different and more glorious manner.

The next scene is in Simon's house. There we find sickness nigh unto death, and who can resist this but He who came to take our infirmities and sicknesses upon Himself? " Jesus of Nazareth, the man whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him,"-as Peter says in Acts a. 38. What a thing it is, what a glorious fact, for poor lost man to find man so used as to be a vessel of' this mighty power! Christ went about in the activity of love, doing good, and all diseases vanished, and demons disappeared before Him; but still He was the servant, for when they sought to stay Him amongst them, He could not remain, for He was not come seeking self, but the good of men. He was the servant, the sent one. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8.) Now "promises" are most encouraging to our faith, and "exceeding precious;" (2 Peter 1) but we never read of promises destroying devils. Promises are not "the powers of the world to come." Miracles (for it is the same word,) are these " powers of the world to come," because effected by the perfect power of Christ, whose shall be all the power in the world to come; and when Satan will be bound, so that he can do no further mischief. The reason why in Hebrews it is called " the powers of the world to come" is that it is part and parcel of this very same power of Jesus, which up to the moment of the world to come, comes in, in grace and power, to deliver man.

But the Lord came in the grace which entitled Him to gather souls round Himself, and to communicate this power to others. This is quite a different thing from working miracles, and giving the power to others to work them. But a power has come in which has touched the springs of my heart, and convinced me of sin, thus making me a vessel of this grace, so that I may convey the same grace to others; being made the channel of it, because I am living in the present enjoyment of it in my own soul, thus making us, as He did Peter, to be catchers of men. " Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Simon Peter had followed. Christ, when John the Baptist spoke of Him, but he had returned to his ordinary occupation of fishing, when the Lord came and entered Simon's ship and taught the people. And when He had done speaking to the people, He said to Simon, " Let down your nets for a draft. And Simon said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." Here we see Simon is obedient to the Lord's word, and the Lord meets him at this point. For so great was the

draft of fishes, that their nets brake, and they filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. The power was thus seen, but with it the consciousness of having no strength to receive this power. The nets brake, and the ships began to sink. But we find this power working in Peter's soul, and revealing the utter incompatibility of God to man, which makes him say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The person of Jesus being revealed to the soul, the utter unfitness to be with Him is felt in the conscience; and the effect of this is, that the soul takes Christ's part against itself. It takes the Lord's side to maintain His glory; for righteousness is planted in the conscience. I am a judged man in my conscience, and then I can only say, 'You ought not to stay with such a sinful man as I am; you ought not to stay in such company' - "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Peter's conscience having been reached, and having judged himself as God judged him-as a sinful man-immediately the Lord steps in, and, in the mighty power of His grace, says, "Fear not." The Lord came into the ship to teach Peter this grace, for He knew full well the state of his soul; and He brought him into this position that He might come in upon the sin-stricken soul in the power of His grace, saying, Fear not. But not only did the Lord deal with Peter in grace, but, having emptied him of self and filled him with grace, He says I am now going to use you as a "vessel meet for the master's use." For now you know what man is, having learned your own heart; and you know what God is, having tasted His grace: "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." It would be enough to praise God for throughout eternity that I was gathered myself, but what is it for a poor sinner to be used in making known this grace to others! This is the power which detaches from everything around; for they left all and followed Him. It was not now Judaism or ordinances, but gathering grace that was at work. And it is now a divine manifestation drawing out and gathering the soul into the revelation of Christ, and then it is able to say, "I am a new creature in Christ Jesus." When the Lord was upon the earth He was drawing poor souls to Himself; but the chief priests and Pharisees could not bear this divine manifestation of grace.

There can be no mending of man except by giving him an object directly the opposite of that which is in himself, and which will necessarily make him exactly the opposite to all that he ever was before. There must be the gathering up of the soul into the thought of the Lord Jesus.

God Visiting the World in Grace

The great testimony of the gospel is that God has visited the world in grace. This was evidently something new; especially when we remember that Jesus died, and had to die. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish," &c. Why does He say, "should not perish"? Because they were perishing; and God is visiting a lost world all in grace. This is what opens anyone's mouth-God's working in love. He can tell of a remedy, for he is cured; and of the perfect love of God to poor sinners. Now, it is this grace that will open a man's heart. Other things will make a man hide and cloak his sin, and seek to get away out of God's presence. Not but God can awaken by terror. Yet what opens the heart is that God has come to save us in grace. When we speak of being saved, we do not speak of mere deliverance from wrath, but of being brought to God. Now if you are to be brought to God, you must have hearts to enjoy God; for it is dreadful to be with one in whose presence we have no delight. Look at the case of a sinner. He dare not be in God's presence, and it is misery to be out of it. Therefore do men like annihilation. Can your souls reckon on divine favor? God visits us to give us the knowledge of His favor. We do not get this by speculating over our hearts. Christ did not come to set us speculating whether He would be love or not; He came to be it. Now when a man believes this, he has peace with God; though there must be conflict with the world and with our lusts; for God cannot receive a sinner loving sin.

In the last three verses of chapter 2 we see Christ's judgment of men. There we read that "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." I will suppose that you have done what these persons did; you have read of Christ and believed in His name. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." Here we get the faith that is in the world; sincere, I believe; but the Lord does not trust it. Why? Because they have acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, but there is not one bit of their hearts changed. Is there one thing done on their hearts or on their consciences by such an acknowledgment of the Messiah? Have they said, What horrible sinners we must be when Christ came to die! Christ did not charge them with insincerity, yet their consciences were like millstones. That is what I call the basest form of depravity-acknowledging love unparalleled, and yet not feeling one spark of affection. Do you believe that Christ died for your sins, and do you still go on in sin? That is why Christ did not commit Himself to them. He knew all men. Do you think He does not know you? Is it any wonder that God says, You must be born again? It will not do to say, You must mend. You want something new; you want God to give you a new heart, will, conscience. You do not want to learn about Christ, you want a nature that can be affected by what you have learned. There must be a radical change in principle, otherwise what will you do when you come to God? When will you come to God? At the judgment? What will you do then? If you were the fairest character in the world, you know as a fact that you do not like to meet God. If it was to-day, you would put it off till to-morrow, and if you could forever.

The conscience of Nicodemus was at work. The others continued as they were. There we see the horrible indifference of nominal Christianity. Nicodemus is rather ashamed of being seen with

Jesus. Let a man's conscience be touched, and he is ashamed to be seen with Christians. Why? Because the very instant that conscience is touched and we get to Christ, there is an instinct to tell us that the world is against us. And of whom was Nicodemus ashamed? Of the Son of God. And this is what man is, and what the world is. Therefore Jesus, who knew the trial, said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men," &c.

Now we get the answer of God. He tells them that "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" worthless, and worse than worthless. It is not the sins that prove it the most; it is what it shows itself to be when it has to do with Christ, the Son of God.

Christ says you must have a new nature. He says that you are so bad that you cannot be trusted, that you must be changed. " You must be born again."

" Nicodemus answered and said, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" You ought to have known from your own prophets that under the new covenant such a change was needed. (See Ezek. 36) If you do not believe earthly things, which the prophets declared, that you must be renewed and have a heart of flesh, &c., how shall you believe heavenly things? But who can tell you of heavenly things, if not He who came from heaven?

We have had the necessity of man's being renewed; now we get another thing-the goodness of God to us as we are unrenewed. It is the truth that I need regeneration, but that is not grace. Grace is what God is for me from heaven. When was it that Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? When the Israelites were bitten by the serpent, when the power of death had come in. So has it come to you. You are ruined, lost, stung; and where is your help? You have sin on you. Can you undo the sins you have done? Can you take guilt off your conscience? Never. Once sin, you can never become innocent. You are guilty, and you know it, though you do not feel it. You know you dare not meet God and talk of sin. No, you would be talking of mercy. When? At the day of judgment. Mercy? It is the day of righteousness; of glory to the saints, not mercy; and of destruction to the world. Now is the day of mercy. God treats you as a sinner. You must be treated as a sinner. He cannot agree to the lie you think of yourself. He says there is none righteous. He cannot say, I have made a mistake. The only question is, whether He will treat you as a sinner now or then. He came from heaven. Why? To make light of sin? To talk of sin? He could not do so. He knew that there could not be happiness where there was sin. He came to be lifted up. " For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," &c. He must take on Himself the consequences of sin to put it away from you. Jesus says, Well, I will take sin on me; if it rests on them it will ruin them. In the 53rd of Isaiah God does not overlook the sins. He cannot. What does He do with them? He laid them on Jesus. As to those who do not believe in Jesus, either they or sin must be put away. In the case of the believer sin is put away, because Christ took it upon Him. God saw the sin and visited it on Christ. Why did Christ die? For sin. What has He done with the sin? Put it away. There we get peace, for we know that the Son of man has been lifted up, and that instead of perishing we have everlasting life. Christ says, " that whosoever believeth should not perish." If I believe then in Jesus, owning that I was perishing, He says, I have died that you should have eternal life. There is so much reasoning in our hearts, (and no wonder when we find ourselves in such a labyrinth!) therefore the Lord comes in in such perfect simplicity. Believe and have life. And why? Because it is believing in One who has put sin away.

Sin could not be borne by us, and God is righteous; therefore Christ came to put away sin. That is however but half of the truth. For in the cross I not only see that this dreadful necessity was met, but that even when I was in my sins God loved me. If I see the cross doing that for me which I needed, that touches my conscience and gives me peace. But besides this, how came Christ to do this? Because " God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c. When we were at enmity with God, He so loved us that He would have us understand that while the world hated Him He loved. it all the while, and gave the thing nearest to His heart for its reconciliation. Hence, whilst conscience gets peace through the blood of the cross, the testimony of the perfect love of God-and of this the cross is the proof -sets the heart at rest. Now the sinner knows God. Not only has he got the new nature, but an object to love. It is miserable to have affections and nothing to love. So now we have God to love, and all the affections become centered on Christ. That is sanctification. Our souls know what God is and what He has done for us, and our hearts go out to this God. How it knits the heart and God together! He has loved me-loved me' so, and will love me forever. O what bliss! We shall have trouble, but we have the certainty of the perfect love of Christ. No matter what the trouble may be, I now know that Christ having gone through all for me, neither death, nor life, nor any creature can separate me from His love.

Now that is the way that God makes Himself known. If you meet Christ in judgment, it is not merely that you have broken the law-that is bad enough; but the goodness of God is leading you to repentance. Therefore it is not judgment now, but God commending His love, and if you are untouched by that you are despising a dying Savior! That is a terrible thing and you know it.

The Difference Between God's Dealings in Government and His Grace in Salvation

Exodus 34:1-9

It is evident that this time at Mount Sinai was of immense importance as to the revelation of grounds on which God can be in relationship with men. Of course these are imperfectly unfolded here; for only in Christ have they been fully manifested. Still, as to the ways and dealings of God, we get principles of immense importance. In 1 Cor. 10 we read, " these things happened unto them for ensamples;" that is, as marks and sign-posts to us; only (as in Hebrews) we must let in the light which has been given subsequently.

It is of all importance for our souls clearly to apprehend the difference between the grace found here and the foundation ground on which our souls rest. It is of importance that we may know God; for we know Him in His daily dealings, and we know Him in salvation. We must never forget this broad truth, (" otherwise grace is no more grace,") viz., that the ground on which God was dealing with the people was law, though grace had come in. This is of amazing importance.

Moses attempted to put the people on the ground of grace, but he failed. He went up, hoping to make atonement. So he said, " If thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." But this would not do with God. He said unto Moses, " Whosoever hath sinned, him will I blot out of my book." Whosoever sinned was to be blotted out, although grace had come in. The people never stood on mere law; for they had broken the covenant as soon as it was given, and then grace had come in; for at the intercession of Moses they are spared. (32:14.) Now here we get a mixture of grace and law, a thing which, alas! we find in so many souls. God spares them, but puts them under law, after He had spared them.

In speaking a little from this scripture, I wish to bring out the distinction between God's dealings in government and His grace in salvation-between His dealings with a soul in respect of its relationship with Him and the ground of that relationship.

As to Israel, the ground on which God set them as a nation as to acceptance was obedience-their obedience. Now that ground was tried and it utterly failed. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" God has pronounced upon this probation" All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

But now, as to righteousness, a totally different thing is brought in-now we get a principle entirely new. For "now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." God in grace has come in; and now it is not my obedience in order to acceptance, but the obedience of another for my acceptance. Now the acceptance is singly Christ's and nothing else; and "therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith does not rest

on anything in me. Faith rests on something out of me, that is, on Christ. As regards acceptance, the soul rests, first, on the precious blood of Christ, in which it had no part except in shedding it, and then in Christ's acceptance for righteousness. "We are made the righteousness of God in Him." "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (This is, of course, connected with life, but of this I do not speak now.) The law rested righteousness on personal obedience. "Whosoever sinneth I will blot out." Grace rests righteousness on the obedience of another; and so now it is not the sinner who is blotted out, but his sins, let them have been never so vile. "Their Sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

Now we must never confound the dealings of God with the ground of acceptance. How often is a quickened soul desiring the love of God above all things, and filled with fears because not finding an answer to this love! which plainly shows that he has never found rest in the righteousness of another.

As regards this revelation of the goodness of God to Moses-" I will make all my goodness pass before thee," &c.-it is not the righteousness of another that is revealed as the ground of acceptance. Here He proclaims the name of His relationship with Israel, "Jehovah, Jehovah Elohim, merciful and gracious." Now this is not the name by which He has revealed Himself to us. "To us there is one God, the Father." This is the name which Jesus has declared to us. "I have declared to them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Now that is not the character of the revelation here. It is the name of God as in connection with Israel. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,... forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." That is not atonement. But the very thing God is now doing is clearing the guilty. Here I get God gracious, and merciful, and patient; (if Ahab humbled himself, God would not touch him;) that is, this revelation of His goodness is as to His manners and ways with them. As to His ways with them, He forgives them. He retreats into His sovereignty, and so He is able to spare them. This is a blessed revelation of the character of God as to His dealings with His people in relation to their walk, for here there is no question of acceptance. I must be perfect to have acceptance-I must be righteous to have acceptance. And this we get in Christ. "Who of God is made unto us righteousness." Once fully settled on the ground of grace, we get here a blessed pattern of the gracious ways of God in His dealings with us. All these dealings are founded on acceptance. If I am not clear on acceptance I shall confound the judgment of particular failures, and God's disapprobation of these, with the ground of acceptance in the blessed person and work of the Lord Jesus. In Moses personally we get the ground of acceptance, but in the people we do not. Whenever Moses came to the people they could not stand before the glory of his countenance: he had to hide it. If I see the glory of God in the face of Moses I dare not look at it-it confounds me-I cannot answer to it; but the moment I see the glory in the face of Jesus, I see that it is in one who put my sin away. I come now to God because my sin is put away. I cannot stand in the presence of God at all unless my sin is entirely put away. Who, knowing what God is, and what sin is, could dare to go into His presence if sin is not fully gone? So if now we can go there at all, it is because sin is put away. Then all the affections get into play. Having got to God and learned His perfect love, all the exercises of the soul are according to the holiness of the house to which I have been brought. I get chastening if it is needful, and if it is needful, help.

Now suppose I find in myself stiff neckedness, what am I to do with it? God in government may strike, as He did the rock by the hand of Moses; but that will not get me through the wilderness. The earth may open, as in the case of Korah and his company; but neither will that do. Here it is that priesthood comes in. Priesthood is to maintain my soul in righteousness before God in the place to which I have been brought. Thus we are enabled at all times and in all circumstances to be constantly reckoning on grace as to the daily government of God.

God had said, "Put off your ornaments" (humble yourselves) that I may know what to do with you. Then he said, I'll not cut off, but I'll not go with you: I'll send an angel. I know-you will be rebellious, and if I were to go with you, I must cut you off. But Moses pleaded with God on the ground of grace; (for he was in the place of grace;) and the moment he did so perfect grace came in. (See chap. 33:12-14.) Thus we get three things: 1st, God says, "I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone that I may consume them;" 2nd, "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people, lest I consume thee in the way;" and 3rd, Moses says, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people." Thus we see that Moses, on the ground of the revelation of the grace of God to himself, gives, as a reason for God's going up, the very reason which God had given why he could not go up. And so, as soon as I have learned grace, the very evil I find in myself-my stiffneckedness (and it is awful; for who has every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ?) is a reason for pleading with God to be with me, because I am stiffnecked. Have you got over, your stiffneckedness? No, you have not. Will you ever get over it? No. Well then, you must have God. What a sense of grace is in this that Moses (who entered into the grace) says, Be with the people, for they are bad. Have your hearts entered into this, to be calling on God because you are bad? If not, you do not know grace.

Are you thinking of mending before you go to God? Can you mend? If you fail, you may think I cannot go to God, but I'll go to Christ as a mediator. That is wronging God. It is not said, If any man repent, but "If any man sin, we have an advocate." That is, I have failed, but Christ has not failed. He is still before God. The intercession of Christ is the activity of God's own grace to break down, to humble, and to bring us back to Himself. For now that we are in Christ, He will allow of nothing inconsistent with Christ. It is this that brings out the knowledge of God. There is blessedness-there is joy. Is it not? He does not say, I'll pray the Father, but calls on our hearts to trust His love. What marvelous love! It is patience beyond all thought. Have our hearts this kind of confidence in God to say, Go with me, for I am stiffnecked? If, when I have sinned, I say, Perhaps He will blot me out, it is standing on law; but the moment I understand that Christ died for me, and that He is my righteousness, the ground is altogether altered, and I find God occupied with me constantly, and I say, Go with me, for I am a poor, stiffnecked, rebellious creature. What a God we have! No wonder if God be with me when I am walking with Him; but to know that he is occupying Himself with my failings! Well may we say, "We joy in God!"

Thus we have seen the entire difference between the ground of acceptance with God, and the government of God with His saints. And the one must be known in order to the blessedness and profit of the other. For the full connection with God as to His holiness, I must have the full sense of perfect acceptance. You may see one person occupied with the government of God, with exercises of heart, &c., but all in the dark as to acceptance; whilst another is free as to acceptance, but careless as to God's daily dealings. We cannot neglect either without loss, for we

have less of God.

How Many Loaves Have Ye?

Mark 6:38

The Lord uses what the disciples had. It was but little-nothing for such a multitude; but when blessed and broken by Jesus, it goes a great way. The God who gave life could sustain it, independent of means, or multiply the means to make them adequate to the need. So now, it is what "we have" that Christ uses. Use what we have in faith, and He will make it meet the need of all present. It is the power of God giving efficacy to His word, that makes much or little a blessing, and without that, plenty is in vain. In ministry of the word, the grand end is getting the soul, through the presentation of Christ, brought into living connection with God. True ministry does this for the poor; the rich go empty away.

John 6

No chapter, hardly, that presents the difficulty of profound truth but should be received as simply as possible; and then let God be waited on, that our hearts may gradually enter into the mind of the Spirit. There are two veins of truth in this chapter, according to the persons addressed, and the turning back upon it after its first and simplest version is among the secrets for the saint to use

The occasion is the desire of the people, at least the idle portion of them, for the Lord's power in feeding the five thousand, to be continued, and so to be fed after the same easy way; being unattracted by the Lord's grace. Divine wisdom turns this to account in this chapter. They repeat every device to induce Him to exercise the power again for them, or to enable them to do so; but the work they should work was to believe on Him whom God had sent. They cared not to believe, but craved to be satisfied. It occurs here, as in other occasions of the Lord's ministry, that as their unbelief proceeds from step to step, and that the Jews murmur and object, the Lord increases the difficulty to their apprehension. The general practice of the divine wisdom in this respect is expressed in the words, " For whosoever bath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he bath." (See Matt. 13:10, and following verses.)

Wherever there was full acknowledgment of Himself, to them He vouchsafed to explain mysteries which He hid from them that rejected Himself. He deals with each one variously, according to this measure; a varying scale according to the measure of the acceptance of His person and office. Is it Nicodemus? Is it the woman of Samaria? Is it His disciples? The expression of the truth is dark or plain, according to the measure of the faith of the person in Himself. It once goes so far as to lead absolutely and finally astray; as in those who questioned His authority in driving those that bought and sold out of the temple. So here He uses the same method. We have two classes, the Jews who murmur, and the disciples who confess their difficulty. The difficulty had arisen in His presenting His doctrine in terms full of difficulty, and to the Jew of insuperable difficulty (in proposing blood as to be drunk); and He goes from things hard, to things yet harder, to be understood by the murmurers. It is plain at first, for He concludes His first words with, " This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." It is the explanation, in grace, of His being the bread that came down from heaven. The bread from heaven, in the desert, did not afford life; this bread did. It is God's bread to give life. Their thoughts were material, were after the flesh, as Nicodemus's were; as the woman's of Samaria were.

But there was enough to bring reflection on Himself as of God: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Another opportunity is given. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." The comparison of the manna and Himself again recurs. They die, notwithstanding they eat the one; they live if they eat the other. But He closes with a new difficulty. The bread is His flesh which He gives for the life of the world. From murmuring, they come to striving among themselves. Thereupon the difficulty is

again increased by the Lord, who says, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." We see, therefore, how He proceeds from point to point; and to faith (as necessary to them) never goes beyond this, viz. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," and He will raise such up at the last day. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." All this is lost, and the darkness deepens over those who yield not themselves in subjection to "the only begotten."

But another class had been stumbled: those who said, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" But it is also what disciples of Jesus should hear; and to them the way of taking advantage of the words of truth and life are made known. The Son of man dies to rise and "to ascend where he was before," the object of worship and the means of blessing there.

But this was to introduce them to that which only the prepared of the Father could receive. He adds, therefore, this; and many disciples conscious of their end being short of this, cease to follow Him; conscious that it was not God that had put them there. The little flock, however, is appealed to; whether they will also go away; but we believe and are sure," say they, "that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." He could not but except him who was in reality none of them; "one of you is a devil."

We have therefore the history in its first simple results, hid from murmurers and brought out to saints in the glorious truth of the Soil -of God; God applying to the. soul all things in Him as they are revealed to faith "front faith to faith." And we are thus sent back to look for the instructions that saints are to receive beyond the gospel that blinded the murmurers; instruction which became the more needful a men resisted subjection; and adapted only to saints as striving on their way to God. Indeed, it is no small labor to keep ever on the ground of grace and dependence. Labor for "that meat," but labor as in grace, "which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the 'Father sealed." This is the second vein of instruction that we find running through this chapter, and from this point; and so, though we have died in Christ, yet evil lives, and we died that the power of evil might not live; and though our liberty is Christ, and our peace His peace, and we are commended to God in Him, yet He that is ascended where He was before becomes the blessed means, through life, of the power of eating that flesh and of drinking that blood which is everlasting life. We lament the thought of those who have turned these things to material or spiritual hope from things on earth. Our Lord would carry us up where He is, that nothing may lack to our enjoyment of God; and when thus as disciples, indeed, we own the words of Christ, that " they are spirit and they are life," we find the power wrought of God in the application of all we want unto His glory by us. Our hearts are drawn to the source of life, whatever form of help we want unto the death of every rising tendency that is the relict of the first Adam, or to the expansion of that image to which God would eventually bring us. God, in His wisdom and infinite grace, knew how man is liable to return to the point the first action of his conscience pressed upon him, of the need of righteousness, which surely, if true, God greatly loves and defends (not in His own presence, for He would give better there, but) against the accusations of Satan, who would say that it is mercenary. That presence, however, reveals sin and powerlessness, which God will replace by righteousness and strength, in His strength, and establish that in which mercy and truth kiss each other. God knows how man returns to the first stirrings of his soul, and then pre-jealously, in His grace, renews the lesson He gives, and charges man in His grace ever to abide at the fountain of grace, which the thought of a condition of

transformed in the renewing of his mind might lead from, while it is grace by death in the old Adam in practical denial of its workings in the lowly doer, (while we look at the eternal light within,) through which we are to pass. To eat the flesh and drink the blood is as necessary to the saint as to the sinner. The starting point is as needful to him, as it is perfectly untouched, and keeps up the ever springing work of thanksgiving, nay, of rejoicing. But this is the way of growth, according to the high position of the Church's union with a glorified Christ, to the pulling down of every stronghold; and we are able to say, "is rather risen again."

The Leper and the Palsied Man

The first thing we get in these verses is the Leper, as typifying the uncleanness of sin, which none but Jehovah could remove. This poor leper was disheartened because no man could cleanse him; but he was now come into the presence of One who could deal in power with his loathsome condition. He comes to Jesus, therefore, and says, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He had confidence in the Lord's power, because he had witnessed the outward manifestation of it in others; but he had not confidence in His perfect grace, because His own misery had made him ignorant of love, as it too often does. But Jesus put forth His hand and touched him and said, "I will, be thou clean." Now no one has any title to say "I will" but Jehovah; and not only did He say "I will," but He put forth, His hand and touched him, because it was impossible that He could be contaminated by the pollution. Man could not do this, but the Lord, as man, came near enough to us to touch us in our very sins, that He might put them away. In this was manifested divine power with perfect grace. "And he charged him to tell no man;" that is, He put nothing between God and the leper's soul as to the matter of his cleansing. But He says, "Go and show thyself to the priest and offer for thy cleansing according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Christ was perfectly subject to the law, "made of a woman, made under the law;" and this very subjection to the law in this healing must turn to the priest for a testimony of God; for they must know that Jehovah had been there. The priest must acknowledge that none but Jehovah could cure the leper.

But after putting forth this power of Jehovah, we have Him immediately as the One who walked through the world as the dependent, praying man; "and he withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." How very carefully the Holy Ghost marks this, again and again. We can find nothing else like God displaying His power in a man, dwelling down here in dependence on God! How does the simple fact of the incarnation create our thoughts about itself!

The next thing we get is the man with the palsy, who was let down from the house-top. "And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." For not merely is there the deliverance from the power of Satan, as in chap. 4:36, and the cleansing from the defilement of sin as in the leper; but there is also the pardon of the guilt of sin, as here, "thy sins be forgiven thee." For sin breaks our relationship with God in two ways. First, in its defilement; God being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and, secondly, in its guilt, being committed against God. But all the grace of God being now come down on the earth amongst men, in the Son of man, who has power on earth to forgive sins, as He Himself says, "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power -upon earth to forgive sins, He said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy couch and go into thine house." Here, then, we get the simple, absolute, complete forgiveness of sins; for the man with the palsy was absolutely forgiven and delivered from sin, there and then. On the earth he was to know that his sins were gone; and he was then to know, in his relationship with God, that his guilt was gone. Thus likewise I am told in the word of God that there is now no guilt as regards the believer in the sight of God. Therefore I am entitled to assume that I am no longer on the ground of guilt at all, but on the ground of grace, which has put the guilt away. For

Christ Himself has put my sin away, and I am not on the ground of a guilty being, but of one forgiven. Of course I have been guilty of the sin, or I should not need the forgiveness of it; but, as God cannot suffer the least defilement in His presence, He will have to chasten and discipline me as His child; though, at the same time, I am not on the ground of a guilty man at all, but of a pardoned one. In Psa. 103 we see that it is Jehovah who heals all Israel's diseases, "who forgiveth all, thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." The Pharisees say, Who can forgive sins but Jehovah? He who can forgive can heal, and, therefore, Jesus says, "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?"

The Son of man was making man's heart to feel that God is perfectly interested in man. "His delights are with the sons of men." Here is more than God looking down upon men in love and pity; for He came amongst them Himself as being one with them.

You doubt, perhaps, whether you can get this amazing boon, but I will show you that you can; for in this is the display of the Lord, as the Son of man, a divine, living, present person, acting in divine grace and power.

Jehovah (still man) is blessing in perfect grace. Well might they say, they had "seen strange things today." -But I would here remark that when the need is felt, and this perfect power is to be found nowhere else, faith will not be put off by difficulties. (See ver. 19, 20.) If God forgives us, then power comes in; and this to man's eye is the proof of God's power having been put forth. "He rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house." The man who was the slave of sin is now seen walking in the power of God..Faith does not need to see itself walk, but it is a proof to others of its power.

Liberty in Christ

Romans 6

The principle of the chapter has been on my mind a good deal latterly, and the Lord in it, I believe. I do not think, beloved brethren, that we always get thoroughly hold of the place of liberty in which Christ has set us, and that as being brought to God. It is said, Yield your members slaves to righteousness, yet that into which the apostle soon turns the expression is, slaves not to righteousness but to God. Because if I speak of walking righteously, I speak really of walking with God. What is said of Christ is this, "In that he liveth he liveth unto God." He had no other life. So with the Christian. I am alive to God. The life that I have got cannot be anything else. It is not living to righteousness, and looking to God as something to come to, after righteousness is attained. There is something legal in the spirit when that is the form of our thoughts. If I yield my members they are merely instruments: my life goes to God, and my members are instruments of righteousness to do whatever He pleases. There is no other righteousness than doing everything to God and as obedient to Him. If I did always what was in itself right, I should still never do that which was right, because it is not enough to do what is right. I must not only do what is right; I must be obedient; I must own God. This is not a mere question of words; it is a question of being with God or without God. Because the principle of what I do then is His will. The life to God will be one of righteousness. Why? Because the spring is in God. This says a great deal for our condition. He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God, not merely to righteousness. There is an immense difference in the effect. Instead of legality there will be lowliness of heart, and delightful and blessed affections.

The effect of being brought to God is that my home is in God's presence. I am born in the house and belong to the house. As a child of Adam I am in this world it is true, but this life is that eternal life that was manifested unto us. I am crucified with Christ, and now it is Christ who liveth in me. He did not get His life from this world. The first Adam belonged to this world, but Christ says, "I am not of this world," and "they are not of this world as I am not." The moment I have divine life and understand where it is-in Christ-I see it is not of this world. Christ did not get His life from this world. He was born in it as a man, but His life was not from it. So we are connected with Him, having the life from where He is. We are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. We belong to another place as our home, because we have got our life from it. We began with something else, it is true; "for that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but then there is the thing to lust against.

This sets us in perfect liberty before God, so that we can begin from God, and act for Him in the world. And what a difference there is between saving to work my way to God, and being born of God. Being born of God, we go out into the world, and act in the world as belonging to His family. Our starting point is from Him. Our home, as Christians, is with God, and we are sent into the world. As natural men, we are not sent into the world, but as Christians we are sent into it, even as Christ was sent into it. When Christ was sent into the world we all understand He belonged to

another place, and came here to be a witness of it. Well, that is what a Christian is. He is sent into the world to bear the name and character of His family in the world and before it. The difficulty with us is, that we do not begin there. We begin with flesh, and the being born of God does not for our minds take us out of it in faith. There is the hitch, practically, with many. Because when I am simply born of God, (I speak of it now as a work distinct from the full knowledge of Christ,) when I am quickened, the thought is, I will arise and go to my Father. When the prodigal said that, he had no best robe yet. He could not talk of a home there. He did not know if he had one yet. He speaks of being a hired servant. There was no known and established relationship with God-no sense of belonging to the house at that time, and yet he was quickened, and set out on his journey. When quickened, the soul gets the sense of the holiness of God. It sees that God has some love so that hope is awakened in it. But it also sees that God is righteous, and that we must be righteous. He is holy, and we must be like Him to be with Him. These truths are brought home to the soul in virtue of being quickened. Well, but I have not got these things; I am not got into God's house in these rags, and yet I have nothing else. The rags are our sins, and sins do not suit God's house. That person does not yet know his Father's house as a home. God did, it is true, for him, but as regards his knowledge and real state, his soul has not got the condition in which he could enter the house as a hired servant, even though he had the nature that put him on the road. Though the nature belongs to the house, yet it leaves us under the sense that we are responsible-that we must be something-which is quite true: but we are not what we feel we must be. Until we know the fullness of the gospel, we compare our condition with our responsibilities, (which are a real thing,) and cannot have peace; and so long as I am looking at them, the fact of being born again enables me to judge better of what is required, but really leaves me, as to righteousness for God, where I was. The, soul that is in that condition is really under law. It is in the flesh. It is standing before God, and thinking of its responsibilities as a child of Adam, and how it can meet these before God. And the effect of being born again is to give a sense of being in flesh, and that is dreadful, whereas before there was no thought about it at all. Now I am looking with the eyes of the new man at my responsibilities in the old man. There is where Christians get distracted and perplexed. It is very useful to convict of sin, and make us feel our need.

What is not realized in this state is death. I have got the new life, but I have not got to death. I have not got to Christ's work for me, which is another thing than being born again. I cannot say flesh is dead and gone. Where do I find this blessing? In Connection with Christ. Death in Christ? Yes. God visits the sinner in Christ in the place in which he is. The Shepherd goes out to seek the lost sheep, and the woman her lost money it is grace. Love is manifested, the love of God in it, the heart cheered, and when it thinks of nothing else, perhaps joyful. But when conscience is awakened, we need more than that. When the soul is at peace, nothing indeed has such power on the heart as the graciousness of Christ. What unwearied love! Going through all the contradiction of sinners against Himself. Nothing, so engages the affections of the believer as the life of Christ, but it does not heal his conscience. If he sees it before he has peace, he says, It is the very thing that makes me miserable. He says, My heart is not worthy of all that love; I find no answer in my heart to such perfect and gracious love. And he is right, for when Christ was in all that love in the world, they killed Him. Even with these new affections and desires, you are perfectly right in so judging; for if you look at Christ, your heart does not answer to Him. In truth, the complaint of not loving Christ is the proof of loving Him. If I say I do not love my Father enough, it is a proof of my sense of the claim my Father's love has on me. But this does not heal the conscience.

The truth is as regards man, no goodness as to God found an answer from him. If grace had closed with Christ's coming into the world, it would have been the absolute condemnation of everybody. For His love He had hatred. "Wherefore when I came was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?" And again, "No man receiveth His testimony." There is the real condition of man. It is not merely that he is guilty by nature and guilty under law, but he has rejected the mercy that has come to him in his guilt. Looked at as under probation, it is a told tale. The whole tale is told in Christ's rejection. Therefore Christ said, "Now is the judgment of this world." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." As much as to say, that any connection with Christ as a man on the earth was impossible. The hour is come; I am going to have the heathen; but if so, I must die. It is the death of Christ that wrote the judgment of God on the condition of every human being. If any had received Him, something would have been found in man's heart. Therefore He says, "Now is the judgment of this world;" that is, the life of man in the flesh, the death of Christ has entirely condemned.

Death and judgment have passed upon it. But when we look at what grace was doing in it, I say that is the very thing I want. This flesh I am heartily glad to be rid of. It is entirely judged. The body is dead because of sin; that is, its only fruit is sin, but I now hold it for dead, because that is so. Then I find Christ coming into this death in which I am. He takes the charge and responsibility of this sin, proving what man was, but going there Himself in grace and obedience, it is true, while it was sin that brought us there. It was by the grace of God that He tasted death for every man. Notwithstanding. Christ's graciousness, He is alone until death comes. I cannot get a place with God until He is dead. And here, I remark, that it is this that answers the objection in the beginning of the chapter; that if it is grace abounding over sin, sin is no matter. Ah! but stop a minute. How does grace abound over sin? By abounding over the nature of sin and setting it aside. Christ charges Himself with the whole responsibilities of the condition that I am in as a natural man, and that I am so distressed about. say, I cannot get rid of it, and have done with it altogether, and leave it out of the question, for I find its power in myself. No, for it is in the question, for you are in your soul in the flesh. But it is just for all this that Christ died, and He is risen, and it is in resurrection that we know Him now. So Paul says, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." I know Him no more after the flesh.

I have come to know that flesh is an entirely, utterly condemned thing: but what I want to know besides this is, that God has dealt with the whole thing on the cross, or Christ is dead in vain. It is closed. I get my place as a sinner there. I meet Him there; that is, I am dead to sin, being in Christ, who, in that he died, died unto sin. "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" This is not a state of feeling, but our place before God; "we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Our old man is crucified with Him. That is true of all Christians; "For he that is dead is freed from sin." It is not said, ought to be or must be dead, or crucified, but that is dead. The Apostle never speaks of Christ as alive in the world at all in this chapter. He is dead before we are in Him at all. It is that truth that I get hold

of for freeing my soul from bondage, that the whole thing that I find out as being renewed in the spirit of my mind, is all put away before I found it out at all. That is the place we are brought into as being in Christ.

The Apostle will not own that Christians are in the flesh at all. Thousands are there, alas I in their minds. But the Apostle does not admit this to be the Christian condition. He says, "When we were in the flesh." Where was he, then, when he says, "when we were in the flesh?" Not in the flesh, of course, at all. Christ has died. I never knew Him at all till He was dead; and dying, He has put away everything that I was chargeable with before God. "He that is dead is free from sin," he is quite clear from it. He has not got the life that is chargeable to death. Christ takes a life-charges it with sin, (at least God does,) and lays it down for us, and it is all done with. He had to say to sin up to His death-He was tempted and tested in every way-but was sinless, and was then made sin. But the moment he was dead it was all done with. He was tempted, but the only effect was to bring out His love to His Father. But He died to sin once. He has settled once for all the question of sin and its responsibilities, and now He has no connection with it at all. "In that He liveth, he liveth unto God." That is what faith gets hold of. There is no question of anything reaching Him. Now you reckon yourselves that you are dead, because Christ is dead. He does not say "feel," but "reckon." I begin with Christ in death, and put myself there, sinner as I am. His death is what exactly meets my state in it vicariously. In my will and moral condition, I was the sin which He was bearing. That was I, but it is all gone. "In that he died, he died unto sin once," and where He went, I have gone in Him. Take a person in prison for a crime, and he dies in prison. What is to be done with him? All is done. The life in which he sinned is gone, and to which the punishment would have attached. You cannot find a dead Christ or a living Christ in this world. "In that he died, he died unto sin once." Now that is for us. "Reckon ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin." Therefore, I say, "when I was in the flesh," that is, your standing with God is not in the first Adam at all but in Christ, because He is dead for us. He does not speak of a man's serving God until he is already set free from sin. But the life I get from God ever goes to God again, offered up to Him a living and joyful sacrifice. (See Eph. 5)

Let me add, as to that, that the conflict which we shall have in the world is now a different thing from conflict under law. You have got the knowledge of good and evil. The state of the sinner must be settled in respect of it, for we have the evil. I have a dread of the evil. I feel the difference of good and evil as desiring one and living under the power of the other. My thoughts of God only increase my distress, because I cannot come to Him. That is truth, but not the Christian's state. As redeemed and knowing Christ, I have got the good, the good, God and my soul, through grace, delights in, and from that point I judge the evil. I am the righteousness of God in Him. Well, in the possession of this good I judge the evil instead of being afraid that God will judge me on account of it. Having the living possession of the good, a life that loves the good, it is not now uncertainty before God, but I am not content with anything that does not suit my position before Him. I am in an entirely new condition. When the prodigal was perishing afar of he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," do you think that he would say that in his father's house? The Christian's manner of judging the condition he was in is different because he is out of that condition. To be under the power of evil with a distressed conscience, though hating the evil that overcomes us, is different from abhorring evil when delivered from it and in the presence of God. This last is holiness, the other, though with a new nature, legal misery. It is never necessary to allow the flesh,

to act. When we have to do with flesh and are in communion with God about it, it has not any power. When we deal with God about it we have judged the sin in its root and it does not hinder. It does not work in me, for I have been spiritually exercised with God about it, and Christ's strength is made perfect in my weakness. In that sense we are never slaves to it. The place I am in is not in flesh; we are in Christ and He who died to sin once is alive unto God. We meet a Christ who has done for the whole thing and we are alive unto God. Blessed enjoyment to possess and delight in Him; we have the joy of the very blessedness that God Himself delights in. Brought into the house in the acceptance of Christ, righteous in Him and that in a better way than any innocence. The best robe belonged to the treasures of the house which the prodigal never had a title to by inheritance. It formed no part of what fell to his share. Innocence is not the ground of our standing before God at all. The whole old man is put away in the death and we are alive again in the resurrection of Christ. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus has come in between our responsibility as of the first Adam and God. IF NOT, I AM LOST. We never get that clear in reality in our souls until we are brought into the presence of God and flesh is seen to be neither more nor less than a condemned thing. Once in His presence, the result of all is this" I have sinned."

No person ever got into this and got back. I do not believe that ever a soul got free in Christ and ever got back into bondage again. A soul may have had joy and yet be always slipping back, but it never had the heart emptied out before God. When that is the case, there is no danger of going back to law. When once we have been brought in the power of God to that kind of consciousness of flesh being a condemned thing in His presence, and the heart has come to know that its only standing is in Christ, all questioning is at an end. If I have got the best robe on rue in the house, I shall not be thinking whether I am going fast or slow to get to the house. I do not believe a person that ever got out of law ever got- in again. The Galatians were in a delusion of mind, so that the Apostle stood in doubt of them as to whether they were Christians at all, because they were adding law as a perfecting of the matter, when they were free. That was not a case of souls getting into bondage through not knowing deliverance. When once this deliverance is known, the soul does not give it up. The shield of faith may be down, and the fiery darts of the enemy may reach the soul, leading it in all but despair to doubt if it ever received it. This may come in a way of judgment, as delivering to Satan, that the spirit may be saved, &c. But this is a rare case, and it is not the soul getting under law.

Luke 12

In this Gospel we constantly find the Lord going over the same ground, again and again, in different aspects; but here He is pressing the rejection of His own Person, not in connection with the kingdom, but in connection with men's souls. It is not the kingdom as being set aside by His rejection, or yet the connection of men's souls and bodies with Him in future earthly glory, -such as blessing the basket and the store, -but the blessing of their souls forever; therefore what is pressed here is the relationship of the soul with God. On this ground, He says a man is but a "fool," that "layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." For "what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" He thus takes them off all dispensational teaching, to put them on the broad moral ground of the soul's relationship to God; and then shows them the consequence of discipleship with Himself.

His coming again also is not in its aspect toward the Church; but the consequence of His kingdom being set aside for the present is, that His disciples are to look for His coming again. And this also bears two aspects; the one for those in relationship with God, and the other towards the world. Both are taken up in this chapter.

But first He puts before the disciples some of the motives which should actuate them as His disciples. (ver. 12.) "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, for there is nothing hid that shall not be made known." It will all come out before God; whatever is said or done, it will all come out before God. Having made this appeal to their consciences, the next thing is that, He being rejected, power will be on the side of evil. Power would be there, and it would be against them; still, not one single hair of their head was unnumbered. This was for their comfort; but as to the government on earth by Christ, that was now closed for the present, and Christ as Messiah being rejected, they must be rejected too, and bear the cross like their Master; being left down here in the midst of the power of evil unsubdued. So thoroughly indeed was power on the side of evil, that when the Lord was casting out a devil, the people said, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." The principle brought out in this is, that the saints are now down here in conflict with evil, but they are not to be afraid. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." Think of your souls as being connected with God. The hairs of your head are all numbered. If men kill your body, do not be afraid; for they cannot touch your soul; and not one single hair of your head shall perish. You may be cut off by an ignominious death. What then Why, "not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father." "Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Nothing can possibly separate us from God's love. However hot the persecution may be, confidence in GOD is all that is needed. As Paul said, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In all human efforts to preserve oneself from suffering, there is shown a want of confidence in God. If I am delivered from suffering, I am thankful to God for it; but if it be permitted, I accept suffering as my portion, and trust God in it. Do not seek suffering; but in confessing Christ, you will be sure to get it; and then you should take the suffering and trust God in it. It is a privilege to suffer for the name of Christ. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." However severe the suffering, let your confidence be in God. Do nothing of yourself, leave everything to God alone; for God may make some man (a Gamaliel it may be) to stand up for you. God may use anything as a means of preserving you which you could not use yourself, even the wickedness of man. So that it is never a question of means, but of who is to use them. It is GOD Himself, and not YOU. And mark that this would not be indifference, or haughty defiance; it is simply trusting in God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

If a man persecute me, I would not say a word; I must be quiet and passive, whatever they may do; referring everything to God. As in the case of Peter and John, when the chief priests "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

Then again, in verse 8, "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." How thoroughly the Lord is supposing the hostility of man! He expects it, for in truth the Gospel sets out with it. "I send you forth as lambs among wolves." He did not say as lambs among lambs; but as lambs among wolves. Therefore, beloved, if you meet with this hostility, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." For what Christ met with in His own person while down here, He fully anticipates for all His followers, and therefore "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.' But then it is as lambs-not in rashness, but harmless as doves, though wise as serpents.

Be prudent in not giving occasion to hostility; but if confessing the name of Christ brings it out, take it patiently, trusting in God.

The Lord sees the difficulties they will have to encounter and cheers them by saying, "If you confess me before men, I will confess you before the angels of God." And mark how the Lord knows how to put His finger on the very point of the guilty: "If you confess me before men." It is not whether they could think of Him in their closets: of course they could do that, if they cared for Him at all; but that is not it: do they "confess me before men?" Alas! how often we cannot find courage to confess Christ openly "before men," when we can do it in our closets. But this is just a simple test how far the fear of man has more power over our souls than God. Still He would not have us go thrusting ourselves upon people: that would be no good at all. "Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves." "Be simple concerning evil, and wise concerning good." As they said of Daniel, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it in the law of his God." Daniel was

simply obeying God, and in thus simply and steadily doing God's will, he had to suffer for it; and so may we. But then let us take care that we are suffering for doing God's will, and not in doing our own will. Not as Moses in his rashness, going and slaying an Egyptian and then running away. There was no good in that. But go on steadily doing God's will, giving Satan no handle; at the same time having unhesitating boldness in confessing Christ, and in bringing out God's truth; but not anything of the flesh to excite or offend the flesh in another, except it be by the cross, and that will always be an offense. As it is said, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me." He took Himself all the rejection of man's wicked heart against God. "He set His face as a flint;" and so must we. But then we are not to fret ourselves by saying anything contrary to the grace of Christ, and thereby bring on us needless hostility. Then, again, it is not sufficient to be right in the thing that we confess, neither to be sincere. It must be God speaking by us. That which flows from me ought to be of the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, and according to the time of the Spirit, or it is not of the Lord; it is not the manifestation of the grace of Jesus. This requires the will to be mortified, and the flesh crucified; for if it be otherwise, there will be the blustering out of something without any grace. But assuming the will to be mortified, the flesh subdued, and the Spirit of God working, He says, (ver. 10,) "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." The Lord is here putting them, in a sense, on higher ground than Himself. What an amazing encouragement to our poor hearts! If you speak, they are even more responsible if they reject it than in rejecting me. This of course could only be true but as they spake by the Holy Ghost: there must be no water mixed with the wine.

Paul could say, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." I should not venture to say, if my gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. Paul could say so, because he gave it out as pure as he got it in. But it is not always so with us; and therefore we cannot say what the apostle could, because it was the truth and nothing but the truth that was given pure from God. I could say so as to the truth of it; that is, I can say if you reject the truth you will be lost, though I cannot say if you reject the gospel /preach you will be lost.

Ver. 11. Here the Lord encourages the disciples for the warfare, supposing the hostility of the world, which must be expected if the gospel is set forth in power, and guarding them against the fear of man. He says, "When they bring you unto the synagogues, unto magistrates, and unto powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." When God first sent out the gospel, He took care that it should go out pure. All we speak ought to be by the Spirit, as it is nothing but what is of the Holy Ghost that God can use. But when it is by inspiration, which is nothing but by the Holy Ghost, then God takes care that nothing else but the truth shall be spoken. But when I am speaking it is not necessarily so guarded as that no error is mixed up with it. Of course anything really good that is spoken is in a manner inspired. But when the truth was inspired by the Holy Ghost, God so kept the man that nothing but the truth came out. It is not so now. When God came forth in creation it was by the Spirit. "The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." Everything was always done by the Spirit. He that God has sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. This was spoken of Christ. But now there is no warrant that every man speaks the truth, because there is no man now so qualified, as to leave no doubt whether there is nothing beside the Holy Ghost.

(To be continued.)

Luke 12

In ver. 13, one comes to the Lord, complaining of the injustice of his brother; "Speak to my brother," says he, "that he divide the inheritance with me." And the Lord replied, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" He was not come to set things right in this world then; though He will do this when He comes again. Had He been accepted as Messiah, He would have done so then; but the counsels of God were otherwise. It was quite right that the man should have his inheritance; but as Messiah He was rejected, and therefore could not then set "justice and judgment in the earth." He was then come about men's souls; therefore He says to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." For while the one sought to defraud, the other sought to obtain; and it was the same spirit in both. They were both loving the possession of these things, and that was the whole secret; therefore the Lord told them, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

He could not be occupied with dividing men's inheritance, for His whole business was with their souls. The world was going to be set aside, therefore what had the Lord to do with men's inheritances? His work was to go on with God, doing His will; and His entire business as to men was with their souls; and this ought to be our business too, for we are associated with God on new grounds. But if we are seeking the world or riches, the effect will be practically to separate us from God. I always tremble now when I hear of a Christian getting on in the world; for "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?" And who ever escapes the snare of getting on in the world? Generally there is a getting down in spirituality, when there is a getting up in the world. It may all be taken up in service to the Lord, but that is quite another thing; then it would be a bright testimony. A person once said to me, What harm is there in riches? My reply was, Suppose they keep you out of heaven; what then? O! said he, I never thought of that! If riches do get possession of the heart, they surely must keep Christ out, and a Christless heart never got into heaven yet.

The real mischief is in the riches of this world getting into the heart. Mark that most solemn word in 1 Tim. 6:9, 10, 11, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." It is they that have a desire for riches, fall into "many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." It is not the question as to whether riches are right or wrong in themselves; but as to riches being the object of the heart. If so, they keep Christ out. A man will then say, But suppose I do not set my heart upon them; but the Lord who knows our hearts better than we do ourselves, does not deal in this way; for He says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;" and not as it is often quoted, "Where the heart is, there the treasure will be." It is quite true that if the Lord give riches, He can give grace to use them; but even then they are a snare. The language of the "certain rich man" to his soul in this chapter is, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" but God says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" So is he that "layeth up treasure for

himself, and is not rich towards God." Here comes in the question, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

"Therefore take heed, and beware of covetousness, which is idolatry." For, be it ever remembered, that while riches are a snare to the rich man, to be jealous of a rich man, because of his riches, is as bad or worse in the poor man; for it just shows that he would also have them if he could. It is not a question about riches. The Lord wants to get souls into heaven, and riches will not take them there; that can only be by being rich towards God. The whole question is about Christ; for if Christ has His place in our hearts, the things of this world cease to be temptations to us, The man that is rich toward God, has, no desire for other riches. But the man that layeth up treasure for himself, is not rich towards God; because self is at the bottom. All this has to do with the world. But now in Ver. 22, He says unto His disciples, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on." "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." When speaking to the world He takes the lowest ground; but when He turns to His disciples He speaks differently. They may trust in God, for He presses upon them that as His disciples they were of great value in the sight of God. Poor worthless things in themselves, no doubt, still they were of great value to God. Do not you be uneasy, for God has a particular interest in you, and the hairs of your head are all numbered. If God feedeth the fowls, "how much more are ye better than they?" They were all. God's subjects by creation, for He had not given up His title to the world. In the peculiar teaching of the Book of Jonah, when God had given up Israel as an earthly testimony, we learn that God's character of doing good to all and caring for all was not at all touched. "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle?" "But does God take care of oxen?" In troth He does; for they are the work of His creative power. But to the disciples He says, You are of such value to God that He would have you reckon yourselves to be of value to Him even in the midst of this hostile world. Do not you be taking thought for the morrow; leave the morrow with God. Do not you be taking thought at all; for if by taking thought ye cannot do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?, He is urging upon them unlimited confidence in God, who is to them as a tender Father. Therefore He says to them, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat; nor what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, but your Father knoweth that YE have need of these things." "Fear not; little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom:" Therefore, do not be uneasy in passing through the desert, for the kingdom is at the end. And if God is going to give you the kingdom, though as sheep you may be killed here, still He will give you the kingdom.

Then after showing them what their relationship involved as His disciples, He speaks to them of His coming again. Ver. 35. They were to be "like unto Men that wait for their Lord." For though rejected for a season on the earth, He will return; and therefore He here tells us of the blessedness of those who will be found waiting for Him.

That which should characterize the saints is, not merely holding the doctrine of the Lord's coming, as that which they believe, but their souls should be in the daily attitude of waiting, expecting; and desiring. His coming! But why? That they may see Himself and be with Him, and like Him forever! Not because the world which has been so hostile to them is going to be judged, though God will smite the wicked.

It is true, there will be mercy to those who are spared. But we have obtained mercy now, and are, therefore waiting for Himself, for what He is in Himself to us, and not because of judgment. That would not be joy to me, though it will be to some on the earth; for "In every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps," &c. &c. (Isa. 30:32.) This is not our hope, but simply waiting for Himself. The whole walk and character of a saint depends on this, on his waiting for the Lord. Every one should be able to read us by this, as having nothing to do in this world, but to get through it, and not as having any portion in it: Turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." This is thought a strange thing now, but the Thessalonians were converted to this hope-for they belonged to a world which had rejected God's Son, therefore they had to turn from these idols to serve the true and living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

What I desire to press upon you all and myself too, is, the individual waiting for the Lord; not as a doctrine merely, but as a daily waiting for Himself. Whatever the Lord's will may be, I should like Him to find me doing it when He comes. But that is not the question, but am I waiting for Himself day by day? In the second chapter of Thessalonians, the hope is connected with ministry, What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Then Paul would get the reward of his service to the saints. Then in the third chapter, the hope is connected with our walk, as a motive for holiness, "unblameable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints."

Then in the fourth chapter, the doctrine of the hope is unfolded; the manner of it comes out-"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This we see what a present expectation the coming of the Lord was; therefore Paul says, ".WE which are alive and remain." But why does he say, "WE?" Because he expected it then. That was Paul's character then, that of waiting for the Lord. And does he lose that character, because he, died before He came? No, not at all.

Though Paul had a revelation that he should put off the tabernacle of his body, yet did he daily wait for the Lord's coming then.; and that will be Paul's character when the Lord does come; he will lose nothing by his death. "Be ye like unto men that wait for their Lord." The character of their waiting was to be like servants at the hall door, that when the master knocked, they were ready to open to Him immediately. It is a figure, of course, here; but it is the present power of the expectation that is alluded to. And the ruin of the Church has come in by practically saying, "my Lord delayeth his coming." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching."

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." "Your loins girt about with truth," for service. You must not let your garments flow loose; that is, you must not let your thoughts and affections flow abroad, but be ready, with your garments well girt up, and your lights burning. This is not rest, for it is an exceedingly tiring thing to have to sit up and watch through a long, dark night. But in the spirit of service, the heart, affections, thoughts, feelings, and desires must all be girt up. And this requires this pains-taking not to let the flesh go its own way; for it is a great

comfort Sometimes to do this, if but for a moment, but if we do we shall surely fall asleep like the virgins. For as the virgins went to sleep with their oil in their lamps, so we may go to sleep those who are spared. But we have obtained mercy now, and are, therefore waiting for Himself, for what He is in Himself to us, and not because of judgment. That would not be joy to me, though it will be to some on the earth; for "In every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps," &c. &c. (Isa. 30:32.) This is not our hope, but simply waiting for Himself. The whole walk and character of a saint depends on this, on his waiting for the Lord. Every one should be able to read us by this, as having nothing to do in this world, but to get through it, and not as having any portion in it: Turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." This is thought a strange thing now, but the Thessalonians were converted to this hope-for they belonged to a world which had rejected God's Son, therefore they had to turn from these idols to serve the true and living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

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night. But in the spirit of service, the heart, affections, thoughts, feelings, and desires must all be girt up. And this requires this pains-taking not to let the flesh go its own way; for it is a great comfort. Sometimes to do this, if but for a moment, but if we do we shall surely fall asleep like the virgins. For as the virgins went to sleep with their oil in their lamps, so we may go to sleep with the Holy Ghost in our hearts. But blessed are those servants who are found watching. The Lord says, this is the time for you to be girded, to take your turn in love to serve and watch; but when I come again, and have things my own way, then I will take my turn in love, ungird you, and gird myself; and come forth and serve you. You must be well girt up and watchful in the midst of evil; but when the evil is done with, then you may take your rest. When in the Father's house, you may lie down and be at ease; and then your robes may flow down without any fear of their being soiled. In that blessed place of holiness and purity, you may let your affections, thoughts, and desires flow out without the fear of their being defiled.

The Lord does not speak to us, as He does to the remnant on the earth. He does not say to them that He will come as a thief in the night, but He tells them the tribulation will be so terrible, that He notes how many days it shall last, and says, "For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened, or no flesh could be saved." But to us it would be nothing that our flesh should be saved on the earth—we would rather get out of the flesh. To them it would be everything to "fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." They would be amongst those who would not have Christ, and therefore will have antichrist; and so terrible will be the sorrow, that the Lord comes to cut short those days. They were too late for the other thing, but now, by reason of the sorrow, a short work will the Lord make of it on the earth. The Psalms express a desire for judgment, because those who express it then get their deliverance; but no Christian can claim this. Who could ask, "that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same?" Judgment will not be our deliverance, but going up to heaven before the judgment begins.

He will come in judgment as it is said. "Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." But that is not for us—we are not His enemies; for He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. And we are perfect now, but we wait by the Holy Ghost to have that which is ours by virtue of our union with Him; and when He comes forth to judgment we shall come with Him. The Lord comes with His saints, when He comes to execute judgment on the earth; and He comes for His saints, when He comes for the Church.

I do not desire judgment, but I do desire that which is worthy of being desired, that of being with the Lord, as the Lord and like the Lord forever. It is the end of the Whole thing as regards ourselves. Therefore, as the Apostle says, The times and seasons are nothing to you, for you belong to the day that will come, when the wicked shall be as ashes under the feet of the saints.

Ver. 40, 41. The Lord then goes on to speak of the conduct of the saints while waiting for their Lord; and "Peter said, Lord speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Now observe that this answer of our blessed Lord's was most remarkable, and in this way, that those Who had the name of waiting for the Lord would become the world. In our country, in England, worldly people are all called Christians, and thus

they are responsible for the name they bear, and not only for the power. So they that take the name of ministers are responsible for the position they take. For people will be judged not according to the power they have, but according to the PLACE they have taken. They cannot say, I have taken the place but have not the power, so you ought not to judge me. But you have taken the place, and therefore are responsible for the power, or you should not have taken the place. If a servant comes into your house and spoils all your goods, you judge him according to the place he has taken. Therefore the professing Church or Christendom is responsible for having taken the place of Christianity without the power; and how can there be power where there is not life? If servants, they are to give to the household the portion of meat in due season, because it is a service to be done in the house while the master is away. So that whatever the place, whether little or great, the servant is to be in service to Christ, while He is away; and if faithful, He will make him ruler over all that He hath at His return.

Ver. 45. " But and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming," &c. Mark, he does not say He will not come, but " He delayeth His coming." And the moment the Church of God said, My Lord delayeth His coming, it got into the world; and the Lord's coming was counted a heresy. For as soon as the Church lost the practical sense of the Lord's coming, it began to decay and decline, and the hope gradually dropped out, until it was entirely lost. What awoke the virgins at first was the cry, " Behold the Bridegroom cometh." But they needed to be called out again from the place where they had gone to make themselves comfortable, although they had been called out before; and that which awakes them again is, " Behold the Bridegroom cometh," &c. It is not that the Church had been saying, He will never come again, but, " My Lord delayeth his coming," just showing that the hope of His immediate coming had lost its place in her heart. The servant does not say he will be a heathen or a Jew, nor does he leave the other servants; but instead of giving them their meat in due season, he begins to beat them. And when it came to this they began to eat and drink with the drunken; not that they got drunk, but that they readily went on with the ways, customs, and habits of the world which they had been redeemed from. Is that the wilderness? No. It is getting into the world and setting up a millennium in the continuity and perpetuity of the Church down here, which is virtually denying the Lord's coming. How can I make preparation for continuing down here if I am expecting him daily? Men tell me that the Lord is providing for the continuance of the Church down here on the earth; but the Lord tells me in His word to expect Him daily to take me up to heaven.

It is a most solemn thing, that this thought of settling in the earth because the Lord delayeth His coming, is fast closing in upon the blinded hearts of the professing Church, and thus fitting them for the judgment that is fast approaching. The voice then ought now to be lifted up like a trumpet to meet this state of things. "Behold the bridegroom cometh." That will be the test again by which souls may yet be gathered out to wait for the Lord, and not settle down into the expectation of the perpetuity and continuance of the Church down here.

Now mark the result of all this. (ver. 46.) " The lord of that servant cometh in an hour when he looketh not for him, and will cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." He is treated according to the position He has taken.

Ver. 47. Christendom is in the worst case after all; it will be better even for the poor heathen than for it. "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law." That which now boasts itself

as the Church, will then have peculiar judgment; for "it shall be beaten with many stripes."

Ver. 48. While the heathen who ought to have acted according to the light of conscience " will be beaten with few stripes." God will not go on with evil, though He may bear long with it. And where Satan is working, believers cannot rightly deal with it, but by treating it as what it is. I have no power over it, for it corrupts the principles of the light within me, and brings darkness into my soul.

First, then, there is the waiting for the Lord Himself; and, secondly, the answer to the question, " Speakest thou this unto us, or to all? "viz., it is to all that call themselves, and take the place of, servants.

The Lord make us faithful as those who are waiting for Him! It will be no joy to my soul for Him to find me heaping up riches when He comes; for there should be the testimony to the world that He is coming. Individual faithfulness is first, and then love to Him and to souls will flow out naturally.

A Man in Christ: Part 1

2 Corinthians 12

There are some chapters in Scripture which contain so full and blessed a statement of some great truth of God that they acquire and retain a peculiar hold on the believer's mind. And though all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and has the same authority, yet this exceptional effect of peculiar passages cannot be blamed, because it is always found to be produced by some chapter which contains a special revelation of God and His ways, or the love of Christ towards us. The chapter of which I would now speak can scarcely be said to have this character, but it contains so complete and remarkable a display of the extent and wondrous heights and deplorable depths to which saints may go; of the mighty principles for good or for evil which are at work in those natures in which they have part in the highest associations, on the one hand, and in the lowest degradation on the other; and of the way in which grace acts to give predominancy to good in us; it presents such a view of the whole working of divine grace to give the perfect result in good and in blessing of the spiritual conflict now going on in us, through the knowledge of good and evil which we acquired in the fall, that I think it may be fruitful to your readers if I unfold it a little practically.

The way in which in this one chapter we find the highest state to which a Christian can be elevated, an exceptional one, no doubt, as an experience, and the lowest condition to -which he can fall, and all the practical principles on which the divine work is carried on between these two extremes, is very striking. In the beginning of the chapter we find a saint in the third heaven, in Paradise, where flesh could have no part in apprehension or in communication. He knew not was he in the body or out of the body. There was no consciousness of human existence in flesh, so he could not tell, nor could he utter what he had heard when he returned to the consciousness of flesh again. Such is the saint at the beginning of the chapter. At the end we find one, perhaps many, fallen into fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness, and unrepentant yet of their sins. What a contrast of the highest heavenly elevation and the lowest carnal degradation! And the Christian capable of both. What a lesson for every saint, though he may reach neither extreme, as a warning; and how suited to give the consciousness of what natures are at work and of the elements which are in conflict in him in his spiritual life down here. Another part of this chapter will show us where power alone is to be found to carry him along his path upon the earth in a way consistently with the heavenly good to which he is called.

Paul uses a remarkable expression as to himself when speaking of his elevation to the third heaven: "I knew a man in Christ." A few preliminary thoughts as to the law will facilitate our understanding this expression. The law gave to man a perfect and divine rule for his conduct upon the earth. But it never took him up into heaven. Heavenly beings, indeed, such as the angels, act upon the abstract perfection of this divine rule as it is stated by the Lord Himself: they love God with all their heart and their neighbor as themselves. This is creature perfection. But that is their nature in which God has maintained them. To prescribe feelings and conduct by law is another thing. Christians often forget this. The contents of the law are perfect. It tells us what the right state

of a creature is, and it forbids the wrong that flesh is inclined to. But why prescribe this? No doubt obedience is a part of perfection in a creature. Mere doing right would not suffice for a being subject to God to walk righteously, because God has absolute authority over him. Thus God can, and we know does, prescribe certain particular acts of service to angels and they obey. But when a state of soul is prescribed-why is that? Because it is needed. It becomes necessary because of the state of the person to whom the command is addressed. He is otherwise inclined, in danger from other dispositions of doing otherwise. To command a person to do a thing supposes that he is not doing nor about to do it if without a command. If we add to this that nine of the ten commandments forbid positive sins and evil dispositions, because men are disposed to them, or there were no need to prohibit them, we shall find that the very nature and existence of a law which prescribes the good on God's authority supposes the evil in man's nature which is opposed to it. This is a deplorable truth, take either aspect of the case. You cannot command love, that is, produce it by commanding it, and you cannot put out lusts by forbidding them to a nature which has them as nature. Yet this is what the law does, and must do if God give one. It proves that what is forbidden is sin, and that it is in man to be forbidden; - but it never takes it away. It prescribes good in the creature but does not produce it. It shows what is right on earth in the creature, but how far is it from taking man into heavenly places! It can have no pretension to it. Man has now by the fall the knowledge of good and evil. The law acts on this amazing faculty, of which God could say, "the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." But how? Man is under the evil and it requires good in him which is not, and shows him all the evil which is in him. It presses the evil on him and its consequences in judgment, and as to the good it requires in him, it only gives the consciousness that it is not there.

Further, it shows no good to him as an object before his soul. I repeat, to make the distinction clear. It requires good in him, loving God and his neighbor for example. But it presents no good to him. There is no re-revealed object to produce good nor be man's good in him in living power. It works therefore wrath. Where no law is there is no transgression. Now, grace works quite otherwise; it does not require good where it is not, though it may produce it. It does not condemn the wicked, but forgives and puts away their sin; it presents to us an object, God Himself; but God come near to us in love. It does more, it communicates what is good. It is not a law. It does not require good where it is not; it produces it. It does not condemn the wicked, but it forgives and puts away their wickedness. It does not lead us to carry on the conflict between good and evil by pressing the evil on us, and making us feel it a burden not to be got rid of, and ourselves slaves to it, which the law does, making us feel "this body of death" as that under whose power we are, sold to sin, and, supposing we are regenerate, making us only feel more truly and deeply that even this does not make us meet its requirements, so that we should be righteous by it, however much "to will is present with us," but the contrary. In a word, grace does not, in the knowledge of good and evil with which it deals, lead us to carry on the conflict by the sense of the power and dreadfulness of evil to which we are subject, and its consequences, but by the possession of perfect and divine good through which we judge the evil as raised above it, by the possession of an object perfectly good, and which is our delight as well as our life, by the possession of Christ; being in Him and He in us. "I knew," says the apostle, "a man in Christ." But this we must a little explain and open out. It is often very vague in many a Christian's heart. In paradise, without law, under the law, and through the presenting of Christ to him, man was responsible for his own conduct as a living man, for things done in the body. He was viewed as a child of Adam, or "in the flesh." He stood, that is,

before God in that nature in which he had been created, responsible for his conduct in it, for what he was in the flesh. The result was, that in respect of every one of these conditions he had failed: failing in paradise, lawless when without law, transgressor when under law, and last, and worst of all, the closing ground of judgment, when Christ came, proved to be without a cloak for sin, the hater of Him and His Father. Man was lost. In a state of probation for four thousand years, the tree had been proved bad, and the more the care, the worse the fruit. All flesh was judged. The tree was to bear no fruit forever. Not only had he been proved to be a sinner in every way, but he had rejected the remedy presented in grace, for Christ came into an already sinful world, and He was despised and rejected of men. It was not all, that man, fallen and guilty, was driven out of Paradise; but Christ come in grace was, as far as man's will was concerned, driven out of the world which was plunged in the misery to which sin had led, and which He had visited in goodness. Man's history was morally closed. "Now," says the Lord, when Greeks came up, "is the Judgment of this world." Hence it is we have, "He appeared once in the end of the world. But now comes. God's work for the sinner. He who knew no sin, is made sin for us. He drinks graciously and willingly the cup given Him to drink. He lays down the life in which He bore the sin, gives it up; and all is gone with it. The very life our sin was borne in on the cross was given up, His blood shed. He has put away sin for every believer, by the sacrifice of Himself, has perfected them forever. He that is dead is freed from sin. But Christ died, He then is freed from sin. But whose? Ours, who believe in Him. It is all gone, gone with the life to which it was attached, in which He bore it. The death of Christ has closed for faith the existence of the old man, the flesh, the first Adam-life in which we stood as responsible before God, and whose place Christ took for us in grace. What the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending his only Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. In that he died, he died unto sin once, in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Faith anticipates the judgment, as regards the old man, the flesh, with all its ways. Upon the ground of its responsibility we are wholly lost. We may learn it experimentally by passing under the law becoming hopeless of pleasing God, as being in the flesh, or we may learn it by finding our opposition to and indifference to Christ. But the whole thing is done away with for the believer on the cross. He is crucified with. Christ, nevertheless lives, but not he, but Christ lives in him. If the cross has proved that in flesh there is nothing but sin and hatred against God, it has put away the sin it has proved. All that is gone. The life is gone. If a guilty man die in prison, what can the law do more against him? The life in which he had sinned, and to which his guilt attached itself is gone. With us, too, it is gone; for Christ has died, willingly, no doubt, but by the judicial dealing of God with the sin which He bore for us. If we are alive, we are alive now on a new footing, before God, alive in Christ. The old things are passed away; there is a new creation; we are created again in Christ Jesus.

Our place, our standing before God, is no longer in flesh. It is in Christ. Christ, as man, has taken quite a new place that neither Adam innocent, nor Adam sinner, had anything to say to. The best robe formed no part of the prodigal's first inheritance at all; it was in the father's possession, quite a new thing. Christ has taken this place consequent on putting away our sins, on having glorified God as to them, and finishing the work. He has taken it in righteousness, and man in Him has got a new place in righteousness with God. When quickened, he is quickened with the life in which Christ lives, the second Adam, and submitting to God's righteousness, knowing that he is totally

lost in the first and old man, and having bowed to this solemn truth, as shown and learned in the cross, he is sealed with the Holy Ghost, livingly united to the Lord, one Spirit: he is a man in Christ. Not in the flesh or in the first Adam. All that is closed for him in the cross, where Christ made Himself responsible for him in respect of it and died unto sin once, and he is alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He belongs to a new creation, having the life of the head of it as his life. Where he learned the utter total condemnation of what he was, he learned its total and eternal putting away. The cross is for him that impassable Red Sea, that Jordan which he has now gone through, and is his deliverance from Egypt forever, and now he has realized it, his entrance into Canaan, in Christ. If Jordan and the power of death overflowed all its banks, for him the ark of the covenant passed in. It is just his way into Canaan. That which, if he had himself assayed to go through, as the Egyptians, would have been his destruction, has been a wall on the right hand and the left, and only destroyed all that was against him. He was a man in the flesh, he is a man in Christ. Amazing and total change from the whole condition and standing of the first Adam, responsible for his own sins, into that of Christ, who having borne the whole consequence of that responsibility in his place, has given him, in the power of that, to us, new life, in which He rose from the dead, a place in and with Himself, as He now is as man before God. It is to this position the apostle refers, only that he was given in a very extraordinary manner to enjoy the full fruit and glory of it during the period of his existence here below. His language as to this truth is remarkably plain, and therefore powerful. "When we were in the flesh," he says. Thus it is we speak, when we refer to a clearly bygone state of things, in which we are no longer. When we were in the flesh, that is, we are no longer in that position at all. "But," he says, "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you." We are now alive in Christ. "If ye be dead," says he elsewhere, "to the rudiments of the world, why as though living (i.e. alive) in the world are ye subject to ordinances?" "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life shall appear, then shall he also appear with him in glory."

The reader will forgive me, if I have dwelt so long upon the first expression -of our chapter. I have done so because of its vast importance. It is the very heart of all Paul's doctrine, the true and only way of full divine liberty and the power of holiness; and because many Christians have not seized the force of this truth, nor of the expressions of the apostle, they use Christ's death as a remedy for the old man, instead of learning that they have by it passed out of the old man as to their place before God, and into the new in the power of that life which is in Christ. Ask many a true-hearted saint what is the meaning of, "When we were in the flesh," and he could give no clear answer-he has no definite idea of what it can mean. Ask him what it is to be in Christ-all is equally vague. A regenerate man may be in the flesh, as to the condition and standing of his own soul, though he be not so in God's sight; nay, this is the very case supposed in Rom. 7, because he looks at himself as standing before God on the ground of his own responsibility, on which ground he never can, in virtue of being regenerate, meet the requirements of God, attain to His righteousness. Perhaps finding this out, he has recourse to the blood of Christ to quiet his uneasy conscience, and repeated recurrence to it as a Jew would to a sacrifice, a superstitious man to absolution. But he has no idea that he has been cleansed and perfected once for all, and that he is taken clean out of that standing to be placed in Christ before God. But if in Christ, the title and 1 privilege of Christ is our title and privilege. Of the full and wondrous fruit of this, Paul for God's wise and blessed purposes was made to enjoy in an extraordinary and special manner. In that, flesh and mortal nature has no part, nor ever can, though we as alive in Christ have while in that nature, whatever

be the degree of our realization of it. Paul was allowed to know it, so that while enjoying it in the highest degree in the new man in his life in Christ, "the life hid with Christ in God," the "not I but Christ living in him," he had no consciousness of that other mortal part which yet burdens by its very nature (as well as by sin if its works) the new and heavenly man in us. He could not tell if he was in or out of the body: he knew on reentering his ordinary state of conscious existence that he had this body; but he could not tell if he was in or out of it when in the third heaven: he was unconscious of it altogether. The reader will remark too how carefully the apostle distinguishes between the man in Christ and himself, as he had the practical experience of himself down here, having indeed the life of Christ and the Spirit which united him to the head, but having also the flesh in him, though he was not in the flesh, Of this Paul, of which he was practically conscious down here/ he would not glory, but he had been given to be in the enjoyment of his place as a man in Christ with entire abstraction, as to his consciousness of it, of anything else-of such an one he would glory. And so can we, though we may never have been in the third heaven to realize fully the glory and privileges of the position we are brought into, yet we are men in Christ, and we have known enough-the feeblest saint who knows his place in Christ has known enough of that blessing to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He glories in the position of the man in Christ, which is his most surely and fully in Christ; and he may realize it too so that at the moment he may not sensibly feel the working of sin in him, though he well knows it is there. We may be filled with the Spirit, so that the Spirit is the only source of actual thought in us. Indeed this is our proper christian state, not always with the same activity, it is true, of the Spirit giving the sensible apprehension of the glory and the things of Christ so as to elevate the soul to that which is above; but so that there is no consciousness of anything inconsistent with it in the mind. There may be indeed even then when there is no conscious evil, the effect of obscure apprehension, an apprehension obscure perhaps even in a way which implies fault, negligence, want of singleness of eye, spiritual laziness, swerving from the path in which a single eye would lead us: (though there uneasiness naturally follows in the soul because the Spirit does dwell in us and is grieved:) still there may be no present disturbing element in the conscience. The being, as men speak, in the third heaven is not always our place and portion. It is a mistake to think it would puff us up. A creature is never puffed up in the presence of God and with Him before the mind. It is when the eye is off Him, when we have been in the third heaven, but are no longer there that the danger begins. We are in danger of being puffed up about having been there when we have lost the present sense of the excellency of what is there and in which we lose, the sense of self. This is what we find in Paul's case. The man in Christ has Christ for his title and is entitled thus to all that Christ enjoys, to joys and glories which mortal apprehensions cannot receive and language formed by mortal thoughts and ways cannot express, that are not meet to be communicated in this scene of human capacities. They belong to another sphere of things.

But wonderful as that is into which we are brought, the question of good and evil, the knowledge of which we have by the fall and cannot get rid of, nor is it desirable or meant we should, must be thoroughly and experimentally gone through by us. It has been as to acceptance. In respect of that it is finally and forever settled before God by the death and resurrection of Christ. But we have to learn to judge the evil and to delight in the good. The law, as we have seen, makes us learn the evil as looking to be judged for it. In grace we are first put into the position of perfect blessing in Christ, and then we judge what is contrary to it. This is the difference of bondage and liberty. Still we have to judge it and grow in our apprehension of good. In the instruction of our chapter this, as

in all God's ways with the apostle, who was to be both quickly and fully taught in order constantly and deeply to teach others, was done in the strongest and fullest contrast of the extremes. The third heaven, if it did not set aside the flesh in fact forever, must show what a hopeless unchangeable thing it is. And so it did. Paul had entered into the third heaven with no consciousness of the hindrance of the body, still less with any working of the flesh in any way. But he must return into the practical state of existence in which he had to serve Christ with the consciousness of what he was as Paul. And here the only working of the flesh, the only way it took cognizance of Paul's having been in the third heaven, would have been, if it had been allowed to do so, to have puffed him up at having such wondrous revelations. It was unchanged in evil. Paul must learn this practically, even by a visit to the third heavens, instead of this amazing privilege taking away or changing it. It was not allowed to act, but he must learn truly to judge it in himself. Note this difference. It is not necessary when we are in Christ that flesh should act in order that we should learn to judge it in ourselves. Alas, it is often in that way we do learn it, but it is not necessary that it should act even in thought. By God's ways, and through communion with Him, we can learn to judge evil in the root in us without its bearing fruit. If we do not learn to judge it in communion with God, where there may be very real exercise about it, (and a very great conflict of will against God. if it has acquired any head,) we learn it in its fruits through the giving way to the temptation of Satan. When it is not judged, we learn, no doubt, the evil-not yet indeed the root, but Christ is dishonored, the Spirit grieved, and but for the coming in of grace, sin will in such case have acquired deceiving power in our hearts.

(To be continued.)

A Man in Christ: Part 2

2 Corinthians 12

In what has preceded we have found three important points brought before us in this chapter. First, the man in Christ; secondly, the gross evil of the flesh if our members be not mortified; thirdly, that this same flesh is not at all corrected in its tendencies even by a man's being in the third heaven, nor by anything else. Paul needed a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be puffed up. There is another collateral point indeed, which I would here briefly notice; the difference between our abstract position as men in Christ, (and we are entitled to consider ourselves as such; it is our true position as Christians according to grace,) and our actual condition with the consciousness of the existence of the flesh and all our bodily circumstances and infirmities down here. Into this actual condition we have now to follow Paul in our chapter and to learn where power is to be found to walk rightly in it. The flesh exists unchangeable in its nature, a pure hindrance.

First, we may remark that no extent of knowledge, even where given of God, is in itself spiritual power in our souls. We cannot doubt that such revelations as Paul received in the third heaven, strengthened his own faith, made him understand that it was well worth sacrificing a miserable, life such as this world's is, for it, and gave him a consciousness of what he was contending for a sense of the divine things he had to do with, which must have exercised an immense influence upon his career in this world. But it was not immediate power in conflict in the mixed state in which he found himself when he had to speak of "myself Paul." He had, and so have we, to walk by faith and not by sight. The wickedest man would not sin while his mind had the glory of God Himself before his eyes; but that would no way prove the state of his heart and affections when it was removed. Like Balaam, he would turn to his vomit again. So in point of fact the Christian, however strengthened and refreshed by times on the road by what is almost like sight to him, and by communications of divine love to his soul, has to walk by faith and not always in these sensible apprehensions of divine results in glory. Not that he is to walk in the flesh or lose communion, but he is not always under the power of especial communications of the glory conferred on him and of divine love to his soul. Paul knew a man fourteen years ago-not every day in that state. He could rejoice in the Lord always. Some Christians are apt to confound these two things-special joy and abiding communion, and to suppose because the first is not always the case the discontinuance of the latter is to be taken for granted and acquiesced in. This is a great mistake. Special visitations of joy may be afforded. Constant fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus is the only right state, the only one recognized in Scripture. We are to rejoice in the Lord alway. This the flesh would seek to hinder, and Satan by the flesh. Here we find first the privilege of having a title to hold ourselves dead. We are not debtors to the flesh. It has no kind of title over us. We are not in the flesh. We may reckon ourselves dead and alive unto God, and sin shall not have dominion over us. It is all-important to hold this fast. The flesh is unchanged, but there is no necessity of walking in it; not more as to our thoughts than as to our outward conduct. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and of death; sin in the flesh is condemned by

the death of Christ; the power it had over us when under law (if not lawless) it has no longer. When we were in the flesh the motions of sin which were by the law wrought in us all manner of concupiscence. But we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. We are delivered from the law, having died in that in which we were held. Our whole condition is changed. What the law could not do just because it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin has condemned sin in the flesh. But if the flesh be not changed, how is this realized in practice? It is this which is taught us here. It is first the giving conscious nothingness and weakness in the flesh. This is not power, but it is the practical way to it. We are entitled, as to our standing before God, to reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and in practice to hold ourselves, as in this condition, not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh; and sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under law but under grace. But our chapter goes further than this: it shows us power so to walk. The flesh is then practically put down. The measure, as stated by the apostle, is this, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." His object was not to gain this life. Alive in Christ we have it; but he held every movement, thought, and will of the flesh under the judgment of the cross, and so the life of Jesus was left free. Such is our path. Admitted into the very presence of God into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we judge in its roots in communion with Him according to His infinite grace everything that is not of Christ in us, and the grace we meet and are made partakers of in this communion carries us along our road in lowliness and grace. Our fleshly tendencies are thus only the occasion of receiving the grace which keeps us safe from their power. I may be humbler than ordinary men if I have dealt with God about my pride, and so of every danger. The present power of Christ keeps the evil out of our thoughts. We have brought God into our life in this respect. It is not merely the absence, comparatively speaking, of a particular character of evil. The flesh-evil is judged according to God, and I am lowly in spirit, and walk softly and safely. But where there are real dangers, God helps us in this. Not only do I bear about the dying, but we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. God works; some messenger of Satan is sent; not sin, far from it; God cannot send that; but some humbling process which prevents sin and pride working; unpleasant to the human heart, but needed for it. All self-activity of the flesh is sin; the body is dead because of sin if Christ be in me; that is, if alive, it is only sin; and if Christ is my life, "the Spirit is life." My body is not counted as alive, or to be so in its will. What is of me in will and nature-me as a conscious living man, a child of Adam in this world, is annulled, or is a hindrance; it has no connection with God; a man in it cannot please God. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

We find in Philippians this confidence in the flesh (not lusts of corruption) judged by the apostle. All that made Paul of undue importance to himself or to others, and so reflectively to himself, was rejected. It would have been confidence in self. Our part is to be in the presence of God, that all that is of self may be judged. But God, as I have said, helps us. Here God had, by the abundance of the revelations given to Paul, given an occasion which the flesh could use. In His mercy He meets the danger for Paul, which he might not, surely would not, have rightly met; for God does not afflict willingly. He lets loose this messenger of Satan at him, but to do His own work, as with Job. And Paul has some infirmity which tends to make him despicable in preaching. "My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not," says he to the Galatians; a natural counterpoise to the abundance of revelations. What can the flesh do with this then? Well, it would

be spared what seemed a hindrance. To whom? Why, to Paul. Just right. Paul had to be kept down - terrible truth for us. Must we be made weak and inefficient in order to be blessed and used? Yes, if, wretched worms as we are, we are in danger of leaning as man on the flesh's efficiency and strength. The works that are done upon the earth, God doeth them Himself, and above all spiritual work. He gives the increase. if He puts the poor vessel in a certain sense in danger, and in many a case where it puts itself, He meets the danger by striking at its root in self. He makes nothing of self, renders the incapacity of nature to anything not only apparent, but apparent to ourselves, and this is what we want. That self should feel self nothing or a hindrance, is a most divine work. Though it be a shame to a man who has been in the third heaven, to think himself something in respect of it: but flesh is incorrigible. But as to the instrumentality used, a mean and miserable process, such as becomes making nothing of flesh. If death is our deliverance from all sin, we must taste it for our deliverance practically.

The bitter water of Marsh must be 49, tasted when the salt waters of the Red sea have delivered us from Egypt forever and ever. Put the wood of the tree, the cross of Christ, into our cross, and all will be sweet. "Crucified" is terrible work-crucified with Christ, joy and deliverance; reproach is cruel, the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. But there are cases where the will and natural reluctance of the flesh to suffer are in question; there are also those which are characterized by the danger of positive evil working, as pride or vanity in the case of Paul. As to all, death must be tasted. The nothingness and incompetency of all flesh must be felt where it would be disposed to think itself competent. It must find its pretensions arrested and set aside when it has, or would be disposed to have, such; it must find itself consciously weak where it might hope to be strong or capable of something. As to what self would lean on, it must find itself a hindering flesh where it would pretend to be a helping one. It is really nothing in the work and path of God; but when it would be positively something it must be made to feel itself a positive hindrance. This is not the end, but it is the way. We must be humbled when we are not humble, or even in danger of not being so. This work may come in preventively. But the flesh must be nothing if we are to have blessing; and in order that the new man which is content that God should be all and knows its power is in Christ only, may be free and happy and God, as it desires, may be glorified. The power of Satan and the power of death concur in ministering to our usefulness in Christ, because Satan wields this power to kill practically the flesh, and we have another life which lives in Christ and lives for Him. This question is first settled as regards righteousness, as we have seen. We are dead and risen again but it has to be practically settled as regards life and power of walk also. So that we may say, whatever our little measure may be, "to me to live is Christ." But the fact that the flesh is thus practically mortified is not in itself power, we must be positively dependent on another, glad to be so, if our heart is in Christ's service and that we find His help only can make us to serve Him. To have Him is joy in every way. This is what follows: "I will glory in my infirmities;" not sin, but what broke down the flesh in its will and hindered sin, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Here is positive power capable of everything, of rendering us capable of everything in the path of obedience, giving no power at all out of it, but of fulfilling in power all the energy of love in obedience. For the Christian path is not mere legal obedience which submits to a will which arrests and stops our will, but an obedience which serves with delight in love and in which love is positively and energetically active in doing good. This path is regulated by the Lord's will and fulfilled by the Lord's power, but that power can have no adventitious aid. It must be the strength in us of a dependent nature. In this is the right condition of the creature, obedience and

conscious dependence, and both delighted in, on one who has title and alone has title to all the praise, who loves us and on whose love we lean.

In the path of service, the energy of Christ's love impels us, Christ's power sustains and enables us. Flesh, only a hindrance to that, must be put down, and practically annulled, that Christ may work freely in us according to the blessing of that love. We then say the love of Christ constrains us. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me, the only true abiding state of the Christian, be he babe or father in Christ; only the thing he may have to do may be different and his temptations too. God in all cases is faithful not to suffer him to be tempted above that he is able. When a man is in Christ then, redeemed, quickened, and united to the Head, accepted in the Beloved, the work of God in order to power is to break down and bring the flesh to conscious nothingness wherever it is needed; not by mending, using, ameliorating, but if needed by its will to be something, breaking it down, yea, making it for man's capabilities of acting a sensible hindrance. That is all that God makes of man as to his flesh and competency, but there is a deep lesson of blessing in it besides being the path of power in source. We are emptied of self, and Christ, that is, purity, and love, and blessing-God known to us in grace becomes everything to us, the mere unhindered joy of the soul, made practically like Him.

But we become now sensibly dependent, as Christ our power, I do not say sensibly power; for though there may be a consciousness of His strength, the service and work is done indeed, but done without any conscious strength. It may be done with joy in communion with Christ, and thus with joy in the service itself. It may be done with fear and trembling, and hence with no joy, though with confidence. That depends much upon how far we have to meet the sensible power of the enemy, always in weakness as to self, always in confidence as to Christ, that it is His work, and He the doer of it, though He may use us as instruments. And this operation is not merely an effect in us, though there be one, it is the positive power of Christ, ' a real acting and working of His power, for which the sensible putting down of flesh was only preparatory, that it might be evidently not the power of flesh, and that there might be no mixture of the two in our minds. Hence the flesh is turned into positive, sensible weakness. But the power of Christ rests upon us, so that it is joy to the soul because He uses us, connects Himself, so to speak, with us; deigns to make us the instruments and servants, willing and rejoicing servants of this power. It is His power, but it rests on us. This is not the man in Christ, but Christ with the man-His power resting on Him, emptied of self.

The path of strength, then, is the being made sensible of our own weakness, so that divine strength, which will never be a supplement to flesh's strength, may come in; thus there is entire dependence, and the positive coming in of Christ's power to work by us. If Paul's bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible, and there was something which tended to make him despised, by whose power was it that such wondrous blessing for the whole world flowed forth on all sides, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum?

One or two remarks more, and I will close my imperfect suggestions on this chapter. First, remark, that the humbling process with Paul was no depriving of the abundance of the revelations, or weakening the consciousness that he was a man in Christ. This would have been positive loss. These were fully maintained and gloried in. The use the flesh would make of them when consciously down here in the body, in the world, was met by all accessory humbling process

carried on in the flesh itself. Next remark that it is not merely power which is gained by this process. The discernment of good and evil, in its more subtle characters, is greatly increased; the judgment and knowledge of flesh greatly strengthened and deepened. Hence the liberty of the new man with God, confidence in Him, the sense of the careful and gracious interest He takes in us, and intercourse founded on this confidence, are greatly increased. Further, remark, that dealing with self, our own spiritual condition is the secret of power, not the quantity of divine revelations we have to communicate, valuable as that may be in its place. For power Paul was dealt with in his own soul, its own dangers and state, and then Christ's power rested on him. Lastly, that our glorying in our position in Christ is all right. "Of such an one I will glory; yet of myself I will not glory but in mine infirmities." When I think of my place in Christ, of the "man in Christ," of such an one we ought to glory. This is no presumption. It cannot be otherwise, whenever we know ourselves in Christ. Do you think I can do anything but glory in being in Christ, and like Christ in glory? Of such an one I will. Let no pretended humility deprive us of this. It is legalism. Of myself, of that of which I have the living consciousness as a man down here, I cannot glory, unless it be in those sufferings for Christ and infirmities, of whatever kind they may be, connected with them, which are used to put the flesh down, that the power of Christ may rest upon me would add to these, one collateral observation. The Lord can unite discipline with positive suffering for Christ, though the two things are quite distinct. When Paul was subjected to contempt in his preaching it was for Christ's sake he suffered, yet the form of it was, we have seen, a discipline to prevent his being puffed up. This may be seen doctrinally stated in Heb. 12:2-11. In 2,4, we suffer with Christ, striving against sin, even to martyrdom and death. In 5-11, the same process is the discipline of the Lord, that we may be partakers of His holiness. How wise and most gracious of the Lord's ways to turn our needed discipline into the privilege of suffering for Christ's sake, so that we can glory in our infirmities. There is chastening which has not this character, being for positive evil. In this, doubtless, we have to thank God, but it is another thing.

In fine, before God we have the "man in Christ," - blessed position, - and which is perfection where we want it; and as to our place before men, besides Christ in us as life, the power of Christ, where we practically want it, in weakness and imperfection down here, resting on the man for walk and service before men. The first is the basis of all our walk, but it does not suffice for power. This is had in daily dependence in which we walk, as humbled in ourselves, that Christ may be glorified, and the flesh practically annulled.

(Continued from page 311.)

Manoah's Wife

Judges 13

It may sound a little strange and harsh at first, but I believe, on a little meditation, it will be found that while reading the epistles of the New Testament, we might seasonably, and profitably, and to the great comfort of our souls, keep in mind the words of Manoah's wife to her husband in Judges 13.

Manoah himself, at the time, was in fear, for he had seen God, and, as he said, he thought he should die. But his wife said to him, " If God were pleased to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering at our hand, neither would he have shown us all these things, nor as at this time have told us such things as these."

A very simple, beautiful, and convincing piece of reasoning. Faith is always the best reasoner, because it sees the arguments which God Himself suggests, as in this case. The simplicity of this woman is apparent all through the narrative. Her husband was rather a devout and good man, who walked more in a praying than in a believing mind; but she was more simple and confiding; inapt, I can suppose, to reason at all, save when the Lord, as here, supplied her with arguments.

Now, this has struck me, that this very same believing reasoning, as I may call it, may well, and suitably, and come fortngly, be our's, when we read the Epistles. For in them we find (as Manoah's wife found in the words which the Lord had spoken to her) such wonderful secrets communicated to us, and such wondrous grace shown to us, that we can do nothing less than rest, as she did, in the blessed certainty of this, that our God has no purpose against us. In the epistles we find ourselves brought into such near relationship to God, made acquainted with such deep secrets of His bosom, so encouraged to bring ourselves, our burnt-offerings, and our meat-offerings, to Him in a sanctuary of peace; that His purpose to pardon and save us finds no room to be questioned. The Lord would not, He could not, after the manner of the epistles, have set us in the place of children, and friends, and worshippers, and heirs, had He not set us in the place of safety and peace. The less is surely included in the better, as this simple-hearted woman reasoned for the encouragement of her husband.

And according to this, I may say, God Himself, in the epistles, treats pardon and acceptance very much in that way. It is rather assumed than taught. If the Spirit of God in the apostle Paul be recalled to the subject, it is because the heart of man is so disposed to return to the law, and to the elements and rudiments of the world, the religiousness of ordinances.

The question of pardon and justification suits the presence of God, as a Judge. It is before God in that character that such a question is to be argued and disposed of. But in the epistles, God speaks to us, His saints, rather as a Father; or, as from a sanctuary where He proposes to meet us as worshippers; or face to face, as a man would speak to his friend; or as the One who has set us with Himself in heavenly places. Surely He would not thus deal with us, if He purposed to "kill us," or to put us under law, and in the fear of judgment.

Indeed, the reasoning of the apostle at the close of Rom. 8 has exactly this character in it. Like Manoah's wife, the apostle reasons on what God has supplied, and he concludes (of course, I know under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost) that the less is included in the greater. He challenges the inferior thing in the name, and in the certainty, and in the authority, of the superior: and this is what that simple-hearted woman did. She said, God will not kill us, because He has accepted our worship, and spoken to us. The apostle says, He who spared not his own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things. Who can lay anything to our charge, since God has justified us?

This is quite of the character of the word in Judg. 13. And our place and privileges, as we read them in other epistles, entitle us to be bold after the same manner. Thus:

In Galatians, relationship is the leading thought. Divine righteousness is vindicated and asserted, it is true, but this is done as leading us to the great and blessed mystery of relationship, or that condition of children, the seed of the free-woman, in which we stand through grace.

In Ephesians, our personal, heavenly dignities in Christ are unfolded to us, forgiveness of sins, or redemption through blood being rather assumed or taken up by the way.

In Thessalonians, we are exhorted and encouraged on the ground of the Lord's coming and glory. But our interest in that glory is treated as a thing sure and settled.

In Hebrews, our place as worshippers is opened to us. We are taught to know ourselves within the veil, and that our proper service there is to be occupied with the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise.

Thus we are, in these epistles, treated as either children, or heirs, or friends, or worshippers. We are looked at as in divine righteousness, or as in the adoption of sons, or as in heaven in Christ, or as in the sanctuary of peace and praise, or as expectants of glory. And surely each of these may well entitle us to ask ourselves, for the great comfort and establishment of our souls, would God have thus and thus spoken to us, would He have thus and thus brought us into relationship to Himself, would He have thus accepted offerings at our hands, had He purposed to "kill us?" Nay, had He purposed to put us under the threatenings of law, and the fear of judgment?

Yes, and even further. The very precepts we are called to listen to, and in dutifulness to observe, address themselves to us, in all the epistles, as saints. We are assured by them to be the elect of God. Responsibilities attach to us, as such; they intimate, as another has lately said, a state of relationship, and not a state of uncertainty. We are not to listen to the precepts which we find in the epistles, as if we were standing under the fiery hill, or listening to the thunders there, as has, before now, been said also by another.

What of this, I ask, can be gained? Had Manoah any answer for his wife? To accept the rebuke at her hand was both his wisdom and his consolation; and it is ours. The weaker vessel is again, in this case, doing good service in the house of God. If Deborah strengthened the arm of Barak for the fight; if Abigail, by godly counsel, turned the erring purpose of the soul of David aside; if Priscilla helped to teach Apollos the way of God more perfectly; we may rejoice and be thankful to accept from the Lord, at the hand of this obscure unnamed woman, of the distant tribe of Dan, this fitting and happy encouragement of our souls. She says, in her way, as the great apostle of the

Gentiles, under the Holy Ghost says, " Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

Mark 15:15

"And so Pilate, willing to content the people." There we get the spring of his conduct. Its fearful enormity does not at first sight appear. It would seem that he could not help it. The people were bent on their purpose. Very possibly, -but if they are bent on crucifying, why should I lend myself to aid them? I might not be able to prevent it, but at any rate I could keep myself from being a party to it. O! there is need in this day of individual attachment to the person of the Son, need of weighing the worth of Jesus, and deciding to have Him or the world.

The Middle Wall Broken Down

John 4

"He that ascended is the same that descended, that he might fill all things." (Eph. 4) A Lamb was seen in the midst of the throne; (Rev. 5;) a Lamb, too, as it had been slain. It is He who purged our sins here, that is on high set down on the right hand of the majesty. (Heb. 1) The one who was in the form of God became obedient unto death. (Phil. 2)

Such passages tell of elevation and of lowliness together; full, ineffable nearness to God, and yet perfect nearness to us. It is as God and man in one Christ. The history of the blessed One is, thus, like His Person.

Mystery of mysteries! and yet the needed fact on which all depends, all of God's glory in us, and of our blessing in Him forever.

The first chapter of John combines with these thoughts. Christ is there traced from the Godhead to the altar; and in touching these extreme points, He is seen to occupy all the interval. He is the Creator of all things-the life and the light. The world was made by Him, and Israel were His own people. Made flesh, He dwelt among us, the declarer of God, full of grace and truth. He is the Son in the bosom of the Father. He is the One that Was before John; and yet, with all this, He was baptized by John. And to bring Him fully down to the extremest point of lowliness, He is the Lamb slain for the sin of the world.

In such titles and characters, we trace the Lord along this chapter. Extremes meet in Him. He is God, and yet the Lamb on the altar. Thus is He seen in His Person.

We then trace Him in His ministry, very much after the same manner, (in the next chapters, 2-4.) from the highest elevation of ministerial power and glory, till He reaches the most marvelous condescendings of ministerial grace. As Lord of creation, He turns water into wine, not merely supplying but creating provisions for a feast. He is then, as Lord of life and death, saying, " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then, as the One who knows the thoughts long before, like God searching the heart, we read of Him, "He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." Then coming, as it were, out from the glory into the grace of ministry, He waits upon a poor, slow-hearted, timid soul, that sought Him by night, because' Gideon-like, he was afraid to seek Him by day. And at last, He seeks a poor outcast, and that, too, in the sweetest, richest condescension. He will be her debtor for the meanest of all gifts, a cup of cold water, that He may win her confidence. He will have all the secrets of her conscience out, that He may get Himself and His healing in. Wondrous!. The One who began this course of ministry, as God turning the water into wine, here at the end of it appears as One who needed for Himself a cup of cold water at the hand of a stranger.

What a path is this!

But it is not merely the perfection of ministerial grace that is seen in this last action, the fullness of divine strength and glory is also in it. This asking for a cup of cold water was just what none could have done but God Himself.

Does this surprise us? It may at first, as the burning bush surprised Moses. But by listening and worshipping, we may find God in this action, as surely as Moses found Him in that bush.

God Himself, at the very beginning had raised a partition wall between Himself and His revolted creature. The cherubim at the gate of the garden, with his flaming sword, keeping every way the way of the tree of life, was as a partition wall. The difference between clean and unclean, set up and instituted in the earliest patriarchal times, was the same. (See Gen. 8:20.) And the same middle wall was but strengthened by a thousand hands, under the direction of the lawgiver afterward, God's holiness demanding this testimony to itself in a polluted, departed world. God could not own such a dead and defiled thing. But God's grace found out a way whereby to bring His banished home to Him. That is, He has found out a way whereby He might be just while the Justifier of a sinner. This is His glory, His own glory. "There is no God else beside me, a just God and a Savior, there is none beside me." He who raised the middle wall alone can break it down. But this He has done. This He did by the cross, by the blood of His own Lamb. As soon as that was shed, as soon as the life, the eternal life, was yielded up, in sacrifice and for reconciliation, God Himself broke down all partition walls. The nail of the temple was rent from top to bottom, the rocks were rent also, and the graves of the saints were broken up. This great vista was thrown wide open, from the high heavens to the place of the power of death. Both the Tail and the grave gave way, when Jesus gave up the ghost. The brightness of the highest heavens beamed upon the eye of the captives of death.

This virtue of the cross is, accordingly, now, in this gospel age, declared. "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity." And again, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." This is the great fact published by the gospel, in order that sinners, believing that God Himself has done this, has, in grace, crossed the boundary which separated us from Him, might, by faith, cross it after Him, and meet Him in the place of reconciliation.

Now, this is the very thing that the Lord Jesus is doing at the well of Sychar. A partition-wall was there. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Rightly so. The Lord Himself had said to the twelve, "into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." God had raised all partition-walls, whether by the ordinances of the law, among the circumcised patriarchs, or by the sword of the cherubim at the gate of Eden. And no hand of man or angel could, by his own authority, or in his own strength, touch a stone of such a building. David attempted it, and he failed. (2 Sam. 14) But God would not have one stone of it upon another; and here, at the well of Sychar, Jesus anticipates that. He crosses the boundary. He asks drink of one who was a woman of Samaria. This was breaking down middle walls with a strong hand, and crossing boundary lines with a firm step. But He who had raised them in righteousness can break them down in grace through righteousness. And that is what Jesus actually does in the cross, and what He anticipates here.

All this was enough to amaze her who was on the opposite side-and it did so. She sees the ruin of the wall, and she marvels. But the Lord did not build again that which He had destroyed, but

encourages her to do as He had done. In divine grace He had crossed the line from God's side of it, and he would fain draw her from that side of it where sinners lay in their separation from God. And He accomplishes this.

But it is always the conscience that must do this. It is conscience that has put us on the other side. Conscience put Adam within the trees of the garden, and it is that which keeps us all "short of the glory of God," or of the divine presence in peace.

It is, therefore, the conscience that must cross the boundary, and it is that which Jesus brings across it on this occasion. He exposes her to herself, He convicts her, He lets her know all things that ever she did; but it is in that very character that she reaches Him. (See ver. 29.)

Have we crossed it, as she did? with all the recollections of conscience, without keeping back a secret, have we reached Him? If His glory were to break full in the twinkling of an eye, are we conscious, this moment, that we should not "come short" of it? As in spirit we sometimes sing:-

" The day of glory bearing

Its brightness far and near,

The day of Christ's appearing

We now no longer fear."

This is, indeed, with this sinner of Samaria, to be on the right side of the boundary line, to be treading, with firm foot, on the ruin of all partition-walls, in His peace, ul presence now, and looking to be in His glorious presence forever.

Nicodemus

How the steps of the grace of God to sinners ascend continually from one point to another. All must, however, come from God, and all that is from Him will return to Him; so that if His goodness prevents a soul, that soul inquires diligently (perhaps for its own satisfaction and because of its own needs) of the thoughts of God towards it; but will surely end in apprehending to its joy and perfect sense of security, that God's glory was engaged in saving them that believe.

This, with the head doctrines of our faith, is beautifully set forth in the history of Nicodemus. The first introduction to his knowledge of the divine dealing in grace is in the well-known history of the third chapter of John's gospel. He came to Jesus by night. He yet feared to be seen consulting the Savior. The same knowledge that Nicodemus had, brought none of the rest of the rulers to Jesus. They knew, with him, that He must be come from God, but their part was taken to do without God and follow their own ambitious thoughts.

How safely the soul follows when. God leads as He led Nicodemus! His conscience had become aware of the defects of that with which he was daily conversant amidst his fellow-rulers, and Christ presented Himself to his soul as having a true claim on him from God, as a teacher at least.

We find mention of him twice afterward. The first time pleading for common Jewish rights to the sent one of God; and he is reprov'd as being His client. This was a great step, though not out of the circle of that which was to be soon "the dry tree" of Judaism. It was feeling towards the Lord that prompted it, and so the council knew; and any right given to Jesus, under these circumstances, would have been to have received Him. So will any right given to the world by the saint be an acknowledgment of it. How gracious is the revealing the steps of Nicodemus's convictions. It is most interesting to consider that the Lord did not dismiss him without discovering to him the key of all blessing in the words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." It easily suggests itself that John the Baptist and the Lord having preached the kingdom, that Nicodemus would readily have transferred his allegiance to Jesus, but was met by Him, as we read in John 3 with the words, "Thou must be born again." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit; marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again." Out of the flesh nothing of the Spirit could come.

The flesh was sin; Christ became sin for us in the flesh, though without sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, and a new creature manifested. Jesus was not an angel, but such as I am, (but without- sin,) that He might be the Savior of such as I am. All are so to be saved. "And we are to be saved even as they," (that is, as the Gentiles) says Peter, i.e. by faith. For SUCH WAS CHRIST, that faith in Him, the given one of God, was the begetting (by the word of truth) unto a new existence in the new and second Adam-the old existence and all its trespasses, and the manner of their having been counted, being put away forever in Christ.

The sweet current of life, the source of action, the words that proceed therefrom, and such a difference in everything, is established in passing over to Jesus, that the world could not recognize the source, and the aims, and ends, of the thoughts of the believer become the disciple of Jesus, born of the Spirit. No: man in the spirit and ordinary path of the world knows not whence such an one cometh, nor whither he goeth-how should he? Blessed whither! and blessed point of starting where all the springs of a divine call and life are in God. This was all needful for the earthly obedience to Christ, how much more to an apprehension of "heavenly things," and it!, communion and obedience according as it is given. One door indeed is to both in the lifting up of the serpent.

The convictions of Nicodemus, as to the person of the Messiah, had been steadily increasing, and the word thus given in divine wisdom prevented the crucifixion being the grave of his hopes, as it was to so many; and we find him now bold in circumstances of shame, and giving his service at the burial of Jesus, and bringing an hundred weight of myrrh and aloes to embalm the body of Jesus. What a blessed education he had been undergoing, how ready now to be introduced to the "heavenly" things, which things were before withheld because he could not apprehend what was needful even to earthly blessing, under God, which are in a renewed heart, in faith and the Holy Ghost. He that came down from heaven alone could reveal the heavenly things. The Lord expressed to Nicodemus the expectation that through the Scriptures he would have known what was needful to what he sought, and his conscience being dissatisfied with the unrighteous dealing of Jewish rule and piety, he came to hear from Jesus of the kingdom He preached; but no conformity to the establishment of an outward and visible order of things would secure that accordance with the thoughts of God that belonged to it. He had to learn that the death and the resurrection of a Savior, (and that Savior the Son of God) must come in as a new source of life to give entrance to it.

The Positiveness of Life in Christ

1 John 3:1-10

If we weigh the state of the church we shall find a great deal of what is negative in the christian life, and contentedness with what is negative. For example, a man sees sin, he takes for granted that there must be sin in him, and it is true, and well that he should know it, provided it be not working; he sees the blood of Christ, and is happy. If his flesh is kept in check as to positive sin, and the blood of Christ is seen, he is content. That is what I call negative-a person settling in himself that sin is, and is met by the cross of Christ. It is riot as speaking lightly of the cross that I say this. There is nothing like the cross. God Himself is glorified by it. The glory we can have with Christ. On the cross he was alone.

This condition flows greatly from all that is of nature not having been judged, and the heart then occupied with Christ. When there is a positive life in exercise which attaches itself to Him, and sees the excellency in Him, it never can be satisfied without seeking to have and be that which it sees in Him. Being free from sin (freed, if you please, for when this word is used in scripture it refers to slavery) there is the positive activity of delighting in Christ. The heart is so far delivered from sin as to delight positively in Christ.

John takes up a positive active life, in the activity of which he supposes the Christian lives, and which has joys and delights of its own. " If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold what manner of love the Father bath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."

I get the nature of which we are made partakers shown from the life which is lived. (If He is righteous, we know that every one who doeth righteousness has the manifested character of that nature, is born of Him.) Where has it come from? From God. I recognize this relationship of a child by the nature that is manifested. The apostle is not merely thinking of what we are in the title of righteousness, but of whom we are sons-whence we draw our-life. Hence it is that he says in verse 9, "cannot sin," for it is the nature of God in which we live as horn again. He takes the truth up, as he does on every subject, in its own absoluteness, without modifying it by the contradictory principle in us. But the result of the possession of this life is brought in in remarkable terms. We are born of God, but the life which we have received is that eternal life which was manifested in Christ. (Chap. 1:1-3.) Hence he says, " It does not yet appear what we shall be," no one has seen the glory, " but we know that when he, shall appear we shall, be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We shall be like Him; it is from the blessed consciousness of this, and the object thus set before us, that the activity of this life now flows. " And every man that bath this hope in him, purifieth himself," (he does not say is pure, but) " even as he is pure." That is, the measure and standard which he has before his soul, is that which belongs to Christ as the object before His soul.

How different this is from the negative state, occupied with sin, perhaps thinking how I shall get rid of it! I am a child of Adam is the thought of such an one; no, I say, I am a child of God. If we are sufficiently emptied of self to have Christ before us in this double way, as the life in which we live and the object for which we live, then the affections are associated with the object We like and He is not merely object but life. The power of the life is exactly in the measure in which Christ is the object. There is where a Christian is happy. His soul's affections are set free and occupied with Christ. He is the One we love and delight in, and we want to be like Him and with Him. If your heart is dragging through the world, and you are trying to get as free from all the spots as you can, you cannot be happy. This positive life is real liberty of heart, and that is what happiness means. He purifies himself as He is pure.

If I am not living this life of Christ, the old, lawless thing is active. When there is not the activity of divine life, there is not merely failure in this, but there is the activity of the Adam life, and it is always lawless. " Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," and whosoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood abides in Christ and Christ in him; that is, if I am eating Christ and occupied with Christ, I do not commit sin, nor is my mind living in the sphere in which it has power. If you are not abiding in Him, you will get down to the other state I have spoken of, the mere avoiding of positive evil, while living in the sphere of thought in which flesh can find itself at home, while the spiritual affections are dull and inactive. " He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." I am in Christ on the same footing of righteousness, as to my walk down here, that He is, as partaker of the same nature and looking forward to a perfect conformity to Him. We have a positive life in itself which is itself. There is this positive life in Connection with Christ who is our life, and this life lives entirely on Him. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," &c; That is the way it lives. It has these two traits-pointed out in this passage -practical righteousness and love of the brethren.

A word on the way the soul gets into this living on Christ and with Him. I do not believe you can ever do that until you get free in your conscience. Till then you cannot get beyond this negative conflict with sin, which avoids the evil the new life sees and judges: If I have the new life, I find the sin in me; and if I have not the consciousness of divine righteousness, I cannot delight in Christ as set free; that is, I must think of the sin. Is not God holy? And have not I sins; not merely guilt, but sins in my members? Yes. Then " he that committeth sin is of the devil." Well, I commit sin and hence I am afraid. That is, the workings of flesh come back on my conscience and I must be occupied with self. The soul is not discharged from self as the ground of its standing before God, through divinely and self-humbling conviction of sin, enough to be cast over on divine righteousness in Christ. It has not been brought to see that the case is perfectly hopeless and then to be cast over entirely on Christ. When brought to this, I am taken out of flesh by this work of redemption in Christ, so that I am made the righteousness of God in Him, and I do not look at myself to know if I am righteous before God.

What a contrast between that kind of negative life, with the head just above water and which says, I am alive, so I ought to be thankful, and this positive joyful life which goes out in active energy after Christ! But in order to this the staff of confidence in self must be snapped.

If your hearts are groveling on with the world, that is not living on Christ. Why have you got these difficulties? Because you are inclined to them and nourish what is the seat of them by continually letting your heart move on in the sphere where Christ is not. Christ Himself is not enough your object. There is surely grace enough in Him to help us, when through grace He is looked to, and a strength which is made perfect in weakness.

Redemption

Exodus 15

It can be well understood after so trying a scene as that in which Israel had been, the sea before them shutting them in, and Pharaoh and his host pursuing them behind, that " they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord, and they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" But although they had "cried unto the Lord," they had not in their hearts, as we see, calculated on His delivering them. Therefore it must have been s most wondrous thing to them when God was so publicly manifested to be on their side. So is it with us, when we are thus tested: with trial on every side, shut in, as it were, with trouble of one sort or another, our hearts are often found buried under the circumstances instead of calculating upon the God, who is above them, to deliver us from them.

Israel, it will be seen, was dealt with in unqualified grace, whatever might be their murmurings, till they reached Sinai, that they might know how entirely God was for them. But afterward, through their folly in getting themselves under law, which they ought to have known they could not keep, they brought upon themselves a different line of treatment. In Ex. 16 we see that when they murmured for flesh, God gave them quails, without any reproach, that Israel might know that God was feeding them on the ground of perfect grace. But after-'yards, when under law, (as in Numbers 33,) when they again murmur for flesh, we read, "while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people." But here we read, (that is, before they get under law,) the Lord gave them "in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full." (Ex. 16:8.) And when they came to Rephidim, where there was no water, the rock was smitten for them, and they get water. All this was continued grace, that Israel might know how entirely God was bent on doing them good, bad as they might be.

It may be well to distinguish, for our soul's profit, the difference between the passover in chapter 12 and the redemption through the Red Sea in chapter xiv. For a person may hear the gospel and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins; may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections going out after him; still, if all this is not founded on redemption-on his having come through the Red Sea, DRYSHOD - when temptation comes, down he tumbles, and away goes all his joy. Now the joy of this 15th chapter is, that God has absolutely redeemed Israel from Egypt and the Red Sea, and has brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. This is, as we shall find, a very different thing from getting joy merely from our being screened from judgment at the pass-over in Egypt.

The distinction between the passover and the Red Sea is this, that in the passover God had made Himself known to them as a God of judgment; therefore the blood on the door-post was necessary to screen them from judgment. It kept God out, and He passed over; for had He come in to their house, as a God of judgment, He must have destroyed them as well as the Egyptians; for they deserved it quite as much; nay more, for they knew better. But at the Red Sea it is quite another thing. There it was God coming in strength, as a man of war-as their salvation. The passover

delivered Israel from God's judgment; the Red Sea delivered Israel from their enemies. The moment they become in danger from Pharaoh and his host, God comes in, and in the "greatness of His excellency" overthrows them in the sea. The very sea which they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes, under the power of God, the means of their salvation. It was "through death that He delivered from death." Like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan; went down under the power of death, and by rising again from the dead delivered us who through fear of death, were all our life-time subject to bondage. Thus there was an end of their ever seeing an Egyptian again. The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt, and God Himself is become their salvation. He, whom they had feared (and justly) as a Judge, is now their salvation. They are redeemed; no longer now hoping for mercy. So it is with a soul: on having entered into the blessed effect by faith of Christ's death, it is not only that the blood screens from judgment, but the God that was feared is his Savior. Now Israel can rejoice that judgment is passed, and sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation, to God Himself, in the light, as He is in the light. He had brought them up from among the dead into the light of His presence. And here observe, that they are brought into God's presence, into the light, as God is in the light, before they have taken one step in the wilderness. For there can be no conflict, till redemption is known. Israel did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh. The only question with them was how to get away from him. They had groaned under his yoke; but they did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first. They must be made God's host, before they can fight God's enemies or their own. So is it with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan, while I am his slave, for there can be no conflict in slavery. I may groan under his yoke, and desire to be delivered from him; but before my arm can be raised in fight against Satan, I must have a complete and known redemption. Israel were not only happy in escaping their pursuers; but it was a complete redemption known, and therefore they could count on God's power for everything else. They can now say, "the people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." (ver. 14, 15.) This was Rahab's experience, as she says to the spies: "As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." (Josh. 2:11.) Israel's joy does not arise from having no enemies, but from God having taken them up and put them in His own presence. But farther, (ver. 17,) it is said, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." This was yet to be done. Israel was already with God in His holy habitation; so we are in God's presence, but not yet in the place His hands have made; "in the mountain of thine inheritance." It is not Israel's but God's inheritance. So in Ephesians the apostle prays, that they "may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." It was God's land that Israel was to dwell in; and the Father's house is our dwelling-place, and He will bring us in, so that there is no fear of the enemies by the way; to faith they are all powerless. Full and entire confidence belongs to redemption. "Well, then," as men would say, "it is all plain sailing now!" No, not at all. If I have redeemed you, I am going to bring you to Canaan, and therefore you must pass through trial. And in chapter avn. we see that it was "according to the commandment of the Lord," they "pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink." It was a dreadful thing to be three days

in the wilderness without water. It was almost insupportable. Does not this make redemption uncertain? No, not at all. Yet it was a dreadful thing to have no water. It was certain death in that country. And when at length they came to water it was bitter. Now this is trying work. But it was for this very thing that God brought them into the wilderness, to prove them, and bring out what was in their hearts. The "bitter herbs" did not show what was in God's heart; redemption had shown that; but in their hearts lay much that had to be manifested and corrected. What can this all mean? Israel had been redeemed forever, and then to bring them into a place where they had not a drop of water to drink! To be sure; this is the very effect of redemption; and so it is with us. Being redeemed forever, there are a quantity of things in us that have to be brought out and corrected. When they get the water, as we have seen, it was so bitter that they could not drink it. But all this is because they must drink into the power of death, and then God makes the waters sweet. So we must all practically learn death; for being redeemed we have got life. This cannot be learned in Egypt. Israel had no Marah in Egypt. It is wilderness experience. Redemption must be known first, and the effect will be death to sin, to selfishness, and one's own will. Now all this is deeply trying; and that is just what God would have it to be. A person might say, all this trial is come upon me, because I am not brought into redemption. But no. It is because you are redeemed.

We may seek to avoid these bitter waters of Marah, but God will bring us to them, because He must break down all that is of the old man in us. It is true that in His own good time He will put in that which sweetens. But because God has redeemed me, and brought me to Himself, He is now putting His finger on everything, be it love of the world, setting up of self, my own will, or whatever else it may be, that hinders my soul's enjoyment of Himself.. As I said, He will put in it that which sweetens; but, "beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." For as surely as you are redeemed, so surely will God break down your own mind and will. Yes, God will make you drink the very thing that has redeemed you. Now, Israel is going on with God, and He is dealing with them; He gave them statutes, &c., but He did not do this before He had redeemed them.

Israel had been troubled before by Pharaoh, but now it was from God. This was the effect of having to do with God. Israel now learns God in a new character, as "the Lord that healeth," which is a different thing from His promise that if obedient, He would put none of the diseases of Egypt upon them. They had been exercised by God that they might know God as the "Healer." And it is for this that the whole heart has to be brought out before a God of grace, that it may know God as a "Healer." We cannot escape it, for God will so arrange circumstances as to bring it about. Sometimes, indeed, we are humbled before men, and this is very trying; this is, indeed, a very bitter water! But, then, what a wretched thing it was to be seeking to magnify oneself.

As soon as "the tree" (i.e. the cross) is in the waters, then they refresh the soul. First, it is joy in redemption, then joy in tribulation, and now joy in healing. First, God makes us sing in the knowledge of redemption; then, secondly, if we are to have the practical effect of redemption, which is the enjoyment of God in our souls; (the flesh that is in us can never do that;) our own will, worldliness; and a host of things in us, will be hindering it until God has dealt with them, and broken them down, and then we learn God as a "Healer." "But," say you, "what do you mean by my knowing God as a 'Healer,' if I am redeemed forever?" Well, it is this, when you have a complete and known redemption, then God suffers these trials to come upon you, and, indeed, brings them about to teach you what is in your heart, as he says, "that He might humble thee, and

that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." God Himself knew what was in thy heart, but He will also prove it to thee, and then thou wilt know Him as a "Healer."

After this, "they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters." Now, Israel experiences the natural consequences of being with God, the full stream of refreshment, as soon as they were really broken down. Had Elim come first, there would have been no sense of this dependence on God for everything; for Israel would not have had the conflict which produces dependence, and dependence communion. Flesh, with all its train, would have been unbroken. It is only for this that He delays, for God delights in blessing His people. The numbers twelve and seventy are different figures of perfection; perfect shelter and shade: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night;" and perfect streams of refreshment from God Himself; and all this in the wilderness, and they rest there. But Israel must be exercised at Marsh, that they may fully enjoy God at Elm. Redemption had brought them to God, but now it is joy in God. So it is with us; although we are redeemed, we cannot have these springs from God Himself, flowing through our souls, with unbroken flesh. Whatever trial we may be in, however great the trouble, even if drinking the very death that has redeemed us, if we can only see God's hand in it, only discern the cross of Christ in it, then we get that which sweetens it, in the understanding of God's mind and purpose in it. Not that "chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Flesh is not faith; and what is more, we cannot walk in the path of faith without faith. Therefore we must be put to the test. If I lose my trust in God for one moment, that very moment flesh comes in under some form or other. The very moment I feel perplexed, or at a loss what to do, my eye is not single. It shows that I am out of communion, or I should know what to do. If my eye were single, my whole body would be full of light. Then there must be something yet to be detected in me, something I have not yet found out in my heart. It may not be willful sin, but still it is something which God will exercise my heart about, and about which He will manifest Himself as Jehovah-Rophi. Thus as it is in Romans, we first have joy in tribulation, and then joy in God. It is not merely that we are redeemed, but refreshed in the wilderness by the God that has redeemed us. Let us therefore not think some strange thing has happened to us, because of the trial we may have to pass through.

Relationship

The elect of God are not only justified, but adopted. They are made children.

This divine purpose touching us began to disclose itself in earliest days. Under the patriarchs, or in the times of the book of Genesis, there were many notices of it. The barren wife becoming a mother, and keeping house; the free-woman's child casting out the bond-woman's; the servant set aside, and one out of the patriarch's loins made heir; the feast over the weaning of the child of promise; and Jacob, by a solemn ordinance, adopting the sons of Joseph into the family of Abraham: all these things bespeak this mystery. They let it be heard, (though faintly, as with an infant's voice,) that God would be a Father to His elect, that He would have children, and not merely servants, in His house.

Thus was it under the Patriarchs, or in the times of Genesis. The purpose of God to have us in the adoption of children was thus signified-not distinctly or doctrinally taught, but intimated in ways which suited these early infant days.

Under the law, this mystery, I may say, is lost sight of. The elect are no longer at home, as in the Father's house, but they are at school, under tutors and governors, differing nothing from servants. The spirit of bondage is received by them through Moses, the covenant, of which he was the mediator, gendering to bondage. But God in His proper blessedness in Himself, as I may say, was not there. His demands in righteousness, as Lawgiver, addressed themselves to man through Moses; but this was not a revelation of God. Man, in self-confidence, led the Lord thus to deal with him. By the law God, if I may speak in such a way, had to take up man as his object, instead of making Himself man's object. For law was not a revelation of God. It did not discover God in His full proper glory to the soul.

Law was a new thing; and it was a great change; and among other results it operated after this manner, to hide away this mystery of adoption, or relationship, which had, as we saw, begun to tell itself out in Genesis-days, among the fathers. And thus was it under the law. The law put man in an independent attitude, instead of setting him in personal family relationship to God.

Under the ministry of Christ a change again takes place. This relationship, of which we now speak, begins to be testified afresh; in its measure to be dispensed. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." In John's gospel, this is written, and throughout that gospel the Lord is manifesting the Father. This may be perceived by the soul that is attentive. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," is again the Lord's word in that gospel. His works and His words were the Father's, expressions in Him or through Him of what the Father was. "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works," says Jesus, of all that He Himself was doing and saying. And at the end, surveying His accomplished ministry, He again says, speaking to the Father, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." (Chapter 17)

This great divine purpose, the manifestation of the Father, leading the elect into family relationship, is thus found very specially in John. In the course of that gospel, the Lord is constantly biding Himself that the Father may be seen. He calls Himself advisedly, again and again, " the Son of man;" and keeps Himself before us under titles that bespeak subordination, such as the " sent " one, the "given" one, the "sealed" one, the "sanctified" one, in order that the Father may be apprehended. He is careful ever to bear witness to the Father, to bring the Father before the thoughts and affections of His disciples. He would have us learn this happy secret, that the Father seeks to be known by lie, and that His business, the business of the Son, is to fulfill this pleasure of the Father, by bringing us into that knowledge.

And thus was it, I may say, under the Lord's personal ministry, very specially however marked in John's gospel. Now, in this present time, under the Holy Ghost, relationship, or the sense of the Father, is made good to the soul, fully, perfectly given, in abiding life and certainty, to the heart of the elect. For the Spirit given to us is a Spirit of adoption. Not only are we sons, but we are made to know that we are so. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." We are delivered from the bondage of the law, as well as from the curse of it. All St. Paul's epistles assume this, I 'nay say; but that to the Galatians clearly and fully teaches it. It is no longer, as it was in patriarchal days, by indistinct notices, or as with an infant's voice, that the mystery of adoption, or relationship to God as a Father, is told, but the power of it is inlaid in the heart, where the Spirit of the Son cries,

Abba, Father. The early pledges of this great mystery, which we noticed in the Book of Genesis, are all made good. Nay, they are exceeded. We are now taught that we were predestinated to the adoption of children; and that our adoption is of the highest order, "accepted in the beloved," made one with the Son. The barren woman made a joyful mother may be said to be now realized in this, that we have received power to become the sons of God, being born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Abraham's zeal to have children, and Sarah's joy over her child, are alike surpassed now; for the Father makes a feast to celebrate His own joy, and the joy of heaven with him, over His regained child. And Ephraim and Manasseh set, during patriarchal days, in the rights of the first-born, is now out-done, through exceeding riches of grace, in the elect being made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

It is therefore relationship which is dispensed in this present time, for the Spirit given is a Spirit of adoption. It is not pledged merely, or published, or sought for, but in the power of the given Spirit it is dispensed, established in the soul. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

And John in his epistle would have us know that the establishing of the elect, in the joy of relationship, was the great end of the grace of God in this present age. The manifestation of the eternal life of Him who was with the Father, has been made, that we might have fellowship with the Father and the Son. The conclusion is, "now are we the sons of God." That is settled. The elect are set in this relationship of children, and they -wait only for full likeness, conformity in glory. "Now are we the sons of God, and it Both not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

The purpose of the Father, the work of the Son, the indwelling witness of the Spirit, all unite in constituting us sons, or establishing our souls in the joy of relationship. (Eph. 1:5; John 1:12; Gal.

4:6.)

We are on the work, but we are also in the person of the Son, and this relationship is both the title and the secret of "fullness of joy." (1 John 1:4.)

There is no personal condition beyond this. The only thing that can be added to it is the outward or circumstantial state of glory. And the two regions lie near each other. "If children, then heirs." The kingdom of the dear Son is next door, may I say, to the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. 1:12, 13.)

What a grief it is to see this grace of adoption, in which we are set, either clouded or deserted! The Galatians had been beguiled, bewitched. They were observing days, and months, and times, and years. This was contrary to their condition as children of the free-woman; for subjection to ordinances generates bondage, and keeps us as servants in the house, and as Levites outside the vail. Therefore the apostle had to travail in birth again with them till Christ was formed in them, till the Spirit of the Son filled them to the exclusion of the spirit of bondage-as Isaac, in due time, was brought forth to fill the house of Abraham all alone.

Thus have we rapidly glanced at this precious mystery, as it is seen in scripture, from beginning to end; under the patriarchs, under the law, under the ministry of Christ, and now in this time of the Holy Ghost.

Responsibility in Hearing the Truth: Parable of the Sower

Mark 4:14-29

As this gospel of Mark gives us the character of the Lord, Jesus, as the obedient servant, so likewise do we find this service of Christ coming out in a most remarkable way. In every act, the divine glory of Christ is standing out in virtue of His service, and is manifested by it, and not merely by miracles; although that also is true in its place. But if Jesus takes the form of a servant, there must be the divine power for the accomplishment of the service. If it be the mere healing of the body, (if Jairus's daughter is to be raised,) divine power must be there to do it. He had to make good the word of God spoken in Ex. 15:26, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," and that could not be done but by divine power. He is content to be as the servant, but if He is God's servant, there must be this divine power, although with the entire abnegation of self, as He said, "I do always those things that please him." But no act of His service could be accomplished without this divine power. For if sins are to be forgiven, who can forgive sins but God only?" And He forgave their sins; "thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." And thus all through His service we clearly see the divine glory brought out.

But then another thing comes out, which is, that when He ascended up on high He transferred the same Spirit and power of service to His disciples, and so to us by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

When the Lord was down here, He took the place of sower in connection with others. For He is not now seeking fruit, but producing fruit. He had come seeking fruit in the Jewish vineyard, and finding none, He had set that aside for the present, as "the degenerate plant of a strange vine," and had now come to sow that seed which had not before been brought to the earth. He came to produce fruit where there was none. He is not yet come to reap, that will be when He comes again, as the parable expresses it. "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." "But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

There are three things in this chapter: first, the full responsibility of the effect of what we hear. "Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you." Thus showing that the result of our shearing puts us in the place of testimony. Therefore the word is, "take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." As if He had said, 'I am looking for whatever you have received to come out again;' and according to the kind of reception the truth has met with in our souls, will there be the fruit produced, "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold."

Then, secondly, between the time of His sowing and His coming again to reap, while the seed is springing and growing up, "he knoweth not how," the Lord is apparently inattentive to the whole thing. During all the toil and exercise of heart accompanying the service, the Lord is apparently unconscious and unmindful. Tares spring up among the wheat, without His taking any notice, or interfering at all, leaving it all to the exercise of faith in the laborers, while He, in one sense, is

doing nothing.

Thus, when they were crossing the sea, they get into trouble by reason of a storm that came against them, and while they were toiling against it, He was fast asleep on a pillow, in the hinder part of the ship. They had also trial in another way, that He could suffer them to be in danger, and apparently taking no notice, so "they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?" They were in the same ship with Christ, therefore nothing could be more safe; but they had lost sight of the glory of Christ's person, and thought they were going to perish, thus connecting the danger with themselves, and not with God. But with Christ in the ship, they were as safe in the storm as the calm. They thought it strange that He did not awake. And there it is, as we have just seen.

In the next chapter, where the man Who had the legion cast out of him, prayed Jesus that he might be with Him, "Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." He desired to be at rest with Jesus, but the Lord said, No, you must go back to be a witness of grace in a world that turned Jesus out.

Then, thirdly, now that we have the apparent absence of the person of Jesus, (but not as to grace-that is always and everywhere present,) we have to walk by faith and not by sight. The Word of God now takes the place of Christ's personal presence, as it is the Word of God that can alone give us the mind of God. Of course the Spirit is needed to apply it; but this it is that makes us responsible for the truth we hear, though of course we can do nothing without grace. A light is not put under a bushel but in a candlestick, that it may give light around. Christ, in saying "Ye are the light of the world" puts us as lights that we may give out the light. Why has He kindled up the light in us, but that we may give out the light? "God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And as there is nothing hid that shall not be manifested, God is now looking for the outshining of that out of our hearts which He hath shined in. This is the way that God works: He first puts a word in our hearts, that we may bring it out again. If God has lighted up a light in my soul, it is that it may shine out to all around. And if not, why does it not? It is because there is some hindrance within-some hidden lust in the heart that dims the light, and if I do not search it out at once, and judge it before the Lord that He may put it away, I shall sooner or later fall into some open sin, and then discipline will bring it out. God is saying, "If the light I have lighted up in you is not shining out, I will bring out that which hinders it." "Judge yourselves that ye be not judged." "For there is nothing hidden that shall not be manifested, neither anything kept secret but it should come abroad." But here it is meant in reference to the truth, no doubt.

Supposing the Church has failed, the things by which it has, failed will be brought out to light. All God's counsels of glory He has entrusted to the Church. We are not straitened in God, although we may be straitened in our own bowels through unfaithfulness. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again:" if you only mete out a scanty measure, a scanty measure will be meted to you in return. For what you have received you are to give out, that you may get more, "For he that hath to him shall be given," &c. &c. When Christ comes again, He comes to reap the harvest of everything He has sown.

Then during this interval between the Lord's sowing and reaping, while " the seed is springing up he knoweth not how," that is to say, while He is apparently absent from us, not interfering in all our

trials and conflicts, we have this on which to stay our souls, that we are in the same vessel with Himself; and however much the ship may be tossed about by the storms and waves of the devil's raising, while we have Him in the vessel, we are as safe in the storm as in the calm.

Then again, we have two things brought out here: the grace of God and the light of life. And whether it be ten, two, or one talent, we may have received by way of gift, the reception of the grace of God into our souls will make us out-tellers of the truth as it is in Jesus. And as Jesus, when down here, was the light of the world, so, having lighted up this light of life in our souls, He is looking for us to be light-bearers in the midst of this dark world, where He has left us (like the poor man out of whom the legion was cast) to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Then how great is the responsibility as to our hearing. "Take heed what ye hear." "He that hath, to him shall be given." That in hearing of God's grace, we may possess it in the knowledge of what God is; and when hearing of Christ, our souls should realize all of Christ we hear, seize hold of it in all its power and bearing, and have it and be it, even the light as it is in Christ, and that will make manifest everything that is contrary to it. For we only want the light of Christ to, make manifest all that is contrary to it in the world and its course.

"Take heed how ye hear." As far as our flesh is not mortified, we shall not possess the truth; and only so far as our flesh is mortified can we use the truth. To the same extent that the flesh is continually judged and kept down, will our "loins be girt about with truth;" because the flesh cannot receive the truth. But when we really possess it in our souls, it judges ourselves, and all that it finds within first, and then shines out. The result is, that all we have heard, and are hearing, of Christ, should thus be manifested by us to the praise of His glory.

The Saint in Trial

Psalm 39

We have in this Psalm the spirit in which the saint should meet trial in the sense of his own evil, and receive it as a chastisement on his own faults. No doubt the Psalm puts before us in a peculiar manner the Jewish people in the latter day, when they will be in very great trouble, and their own fault will have brought them into it-for the people at whose hands they suffer are only the rod which God will use to correct them for their faults. Now, if I am in trouble, and finding it is my own fault that has brought me into it, what can I say? But " I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue," &c., (verse 1,) or, " Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." (Ver. 8, 9.)

" I would add here that there is a government which God exercises in the world-in providence I mean-not visibly and ostensibly of course, but really nevertheless, and the principle of which He exercises also in respect of the saint. " If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." That is the relationship of children brings under the exercise of discipline, instead of exempting from it. The Father judges them-net as to final judgment, for in this respect " the Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son." But it is not a question of judgment hereafter, but of the Father judging His children. And it is very important for a saint to know that this government is going on every day. It is a great principle in the government of God; and if a saint meets trial in the world in a right spirit, it is with the consciousness of its being the consequence of his own failure. " I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Because the natural tendency of the heart is to "fret itself because of evil doers," therefore one has to watch." "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good." "My heart was hot within me, and while I was musing the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue." Now what effect had this upon him? Did it lead him to ask to have the evils removed or turned away? No, but it turns him to self-judgment. "Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am." It is the nothingness of all that is around and all that he is that he would learn. "Surely every man walketh in a vain show - they are disquieted in vain, and now Lord what wait I for? my hope is in thee." He occupies himself with God. "Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish." It is to the Lord he says this. His hope is in God, though he is full of transgressions. When he had got so far as to see that man is altogether vanity, he is dumb. "I opened not my mouth because thou didst it." And because God loves us, he will not leave us without chastisement. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psa. 32:5.) He does not mean in reference to the final judgment, but to daily forgiveness. We have need of constant exercise and trial, that the heart may be brought to a consciousness of its own relation to God, and condition before God, and then there is perfect quiet. There must be perfect confidence when we get there. It is but saying we are perfect vanity and nothingness; and then He lifts us up, and we can say, " but my hope is in thee."

The Saints' Praise, As Taught and Led by Christ

There is much more method in the Psalms than is generally supposed; but I cannot enter at present into so large a subject. I would draw the reader's attention only to four of them, and in particular to some points in the character of the last of the four, a psalm with which every reader of scripture is familiar-the 22nd.

In the 19th Psalm we have two great witnesses of the power and thoughts of God. First, from verse 1 to 6, the witness creation affords, and especially the heavens " The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork." From the 6th verse to the end, the perfection of the law is spoken of-the question of man's keeping it is not here introduced, it is the perfectness of the law itself which is insisted on, and its value for the soul of man, wherever it brings its light, and the moral power of its instructions. These witnesses have their own unchangeable character. Man has been able to corrupt and change the face of the earth, and judgment and destruction have come upon it, death and misery. What is reached by man is, alas! corrupted by man. But the heavens, and the sun in its course, proclaim with bright and unvarying witness, blessed be God, beyond the reach of man's corrupting hand, the glory of Him that made them, and,

"Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth,
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

Forever singing, as they shine,
'The hand that made us is divine.'"

Man may have indeed, perverted these witnesses of power to idolatry, but where man does not reach, all creation still proclaims the glory of God its Creator, So with the law: flesh under it is dill, obedient and perverse; the law itself, of course, changes not. It bears witness to the mind of God about man, though man under it may not keep it; and it gives no life that he may, and so obtain righteousness by it. But another witness, of deeper and fuller character, one who was a witness to the nature, as well as to the power of God; one who manifested the righteousness which the law

claimed and taught; and, besides that, revealed and displayed God's love in the midst of the sin and corruption in which man was, appeared amongst those who were guilty of the sin, and under the bondage of the corruption. Christ was amongst men. It was not merely creative glory displayed in the heavens, the work of God's hands, the moon and the stars which He had ordained, shining above, and unreachd by man's corruption; nor the law, the rule of right in man, which he could not corrupt, but which condemned him because he was disobedient to it. It was love itself: God, Who is love, manifested as man in the midst of corruption; man, perfect in love to God and to his neighbor; in a word, the witness of divine love and human perfectness in the midst of corruption; passing through it, meeting it in grace, to show that the love of God could, and did, reach to these corrupt ones; passing through it in perfect holiness and righteousness, to show that it was God's love which did thus visit them, as, indeed, it alone had a title to do so. But this Blessed One came in a peculiar manner. He came according to prophecies and promises, in the midst of a people whom God had prepared for this purpose; a people to whom the promises had been given according to the flesh, amongst whom, after their redemption out of Egypt, all the prophets had appeared; who had the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the public worship, and the revelation of Jehovah, the one true God, whose law it was, and by whom the prophets were sent.

How was the promised Messiah, the Christ, received? We all know He was despised and rejected of men, a scorn of men and an outcast of the people. They saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. " He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The perfection of the witness He bore caused His rejection, and for His love He found hatred. The Christ found a day of trouble; scorned and rejected by the people to whom He came in love, and according to promise and prophecy. It is in this state that He is seen in Psa. 20 and prophetically addressed as by the little remnant whose hearts were under the influence of the Spirit of God. It is, of course, in Jewish terms and thoughts, but the comparison with Psa. 21 shows clearly to whom it applies. Indeed, in the 6th verse, the person who is the subject of the Psalm is said to be Jehovah's anointed, that is, His Christ. The little residue of those who favored His righteous cause, seeing Him rejected of men, desire, in the prophetic testimony of the Psalms, earnestly His acceptance of God, help and deliverance from the sanctuary. They see the perfectness of the desire of His heart, and their own would fain behold the fulfillment of His counsels. Helpless themselves, and not here reaching to the height of God's counsels in redemption, these witnesses of Christ's sufferings, (as Peter calls himself,) as observers of His trouble, and penetrated with love to Himself, look to one who is their only resource, to look on the righteous One, and hear and grant the deliverance a Jew expected from the sanctuary in Zion. In Psa. 21 we get the inspired answer to this godly desire, already anticipated in verses 3 and 6 of Psa. 20. In Psa. 21 they celebrate, prophetically, the triumph of the Christ. He has been heard. (Compare 20:4, and 21: 2.)

But now we have His desires explained, His earthly sorrows opened. out. Death was before Him. (Comp. here Heb. 5:7.) He asked life of Jehovah, and He is heard. But how, after all? In length of days, (as man,) forever and ever. " His glory," they say to Jehovah, " is great in thy salvation: honor and majesty thou hast laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed forever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." (Comp. Psa. 16:10, 11.) He was prevented with the blessings of goodness, a crown of pure gold set on. His head. In a word, the rejected Messiah is exalted by the right hand of God, and set in glory and majesty above. In these two

Psalms, therefore, we have the rejected Messiah exalted by God, honor and majesty put upon Him, and length of days given Him forever and ever. He had suffered from men, been despised and rejected by them, and God has glorified Him as man. Mark the result. His hand finds out all his enemies, His right hand those that hate Him. He makes them as a fiery oven in the day of His anger. For they intended mischief against Him, which they were not able to perform. As He said by parable Himself: "Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." In the day of His anger the glorified Christ will execute judgment on His enemies. Man had despised and rejected Him, imagined mischief against Him, and judgment will be the consequence for men.

But the sufferings of Christ had a far deeper character. He suffered from the hand of God. He suffered for sin. From man He had suffered for righteousness' sake, and had hatred for His love. From God He suffers for sin, being made sin for us. Here He is alone, none to sympathize, none to stand by, and with true though feeble interest, at least in spirit, take an interest in His sorrow. In the 20th Psalm we have seen this. In the Gospels we may find Mary anointing Him for His burial, those whom the Lord owns having continued with Him in His temptations, who, in spirit, would take up the words of the psalm, if trouble came on Him " Jehovah hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." But when He comes to suffer from God for sin, to pass through death its wages, who could go with Him there? Who could pass these waters of Jordan when they overflowed all their banks? "As I said to the Jews, so now say I to you," declares the Lord to His disciples, " whither I go you cannot follow me now." This was true of the power of death itself as the path to glory. But more than this, in atonement what place could the sinner have? Christ drank that cup that we might never drink it. Hence, while in the 20th Psalm the saints in spirit are looking at Christ suffering with deep interest and affection, whilst they can look on, and observe Him, and love Him, in the midst of rejecting scorers; in the 22nd Christ speaks Himself and alone. None could observe with sympathy, or fathom, or express, what the suffering He there underwent was. The words are in the mouth of the sufferer who was alone, and alone could express them. He was there, no doubt, suffering from man and as man. Dogs and bulls of Bashan had closed Him round, but His cry was to Jehovah, that He, at least, would not be far from Him. But no, the fathers had trusted and were delivered, but this Blessed One must drink the cup to the dregs. Perfect and sinless, He could say, "why hast thou forsaken me?" We have learned and say why. It was for us. He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Here then the Lord was suffering from God, the forsaking of God, that dreadful cup for the Holy One, in His soul. He was suffering for sin, not as He did from man, for righteousness. And now mark the blessed result. Is it judgment? He was bearing it for us. Was sin to be brought on any? It was Jehovah Himself who was bruising Him, and who put Him to grief. Sin was put away for us there. What is the result then? Unmingled, unhindered grace. The bar to the full outflowing of love was taken away in the putting away of sin. Till Jesus was baptized with that baptism, how was He straitened. Not surely in His own bowels of love; but God, consistently with His glory, could not exercise His love and make light of unrighteousness. Surely this was no making light of it. God could now give the fullest scope to the highest and divinest exercise of love shown in, and indeed, in its results, founded on, the redemption that was there accomplished. God was glorified there, and the glory of God was the result for Him that had accomplished it, and that glory is now to us the hope of righteousness by faith. God could not endure sin, but He could put it away perfectly in grace as that which He could

not endure, instead of putting the sinner away in his sins from before His face, because He could not endure them. But there is more than this: Christ was heard because he feared. His appeal was not unlistened to, though it was impossible, if we were to be saved, and God fully glorified, and man fully glorified in Christ, that the cup should not be drank, that Christ should not undergo, not merely the fact of death, but the forsaking of God.

Now, though we see the Lord giving up His spirit to His Father in perfect peace, yet the resurrection was the great answer of God to His demand of life. That was the power of God entering into the place and seat of death, and taking the man of His delights out from among the dead in the power of an endless life, declaring Him His Son with power, and giving Him His place according to the counsels of God. It was man set up by the power and according to the counsels of God, and by the love and glory of the Father, where, as regards Christ, He deserved to be, and the Father's delight was to place Him. He was placed before God and the Father as the One whom He delighted in, and as His Son in blessedness (sin being put away). This was the relationship in which Christ stood as man before God and His Father. This was the name of God towards Him. A Deliverer from death and all the consequences of sin which He had borne, and a placing Him in righteous glory and infinite delight in His presence as Son. This is the name which, as heard from the horns of the unicorns, He declares to His brethren. Such was His first thought. How sweet is it to see this! The moment He has entered into the enjoyment of this name, of this relationship with God, He must bring His brethren into the same relationship and the same joy. Previously, indeed, unless in the very vague expression, " my brother, and sister, and mother," He had never called them brethren. The corn of wheat abode alone. Now redemption was wrought out, and He could bring them into the same place of blessing as Himself: His precious love does it at once. "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren." And such we find to be historically the case. Speaking to Mary Magdalene, to whom He first appeared, He says, "Go tell my brethren that I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He declares to them the name in which He rejoiced with His Father and God, saluting them as His brethren. God is our Father as well as His, our God as well as His. This is most blessed. If, indeed, taught by the Spirit, we enter into this love. But the place the Lord then takes shows how thoroughly He sets us in this place of perfect blessing, where He is Himself. "In the midst of the congregation will I sing praise unto thee." How sweet to see the Lord leading the praises of the congregation, the poor remnant whom He has gathered by His death and quickened unto joy by His resurrection. Alone, when it was suffering and death for sin, He gathers them all to Himself for the joy He has wrought by it. And mark the result as to the true character of our praise. Christ, as thus risen into blessedness, having declared to His brethren the name of His God and Father, His praise must be the perfect answer and reflex of this blessing, of this blessed relationship as He enjoys it as man. And after toil and pain, after death and anguish, after wrath and the righteous forsaking of God, oh, what to Him must have been His entering, as risen from the dead, into the ineffable light and joy of God's countenance, in the perfect place into which He had come by that path of life. " Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand pleasures for evermore.' Into this He now brings His brethren. He leads the chorus of praise. Thus our praise must be according to the fullness with which Christ knows and enjoys the blessedness of the fruit of His work, and the relationship into which He is entered as man in virtue of it. It must answer to the name He declares to us as heard from the horns of the unicorns and risen, that we

may join Him in praising His Father and our Father, His God and our God, or it is out of tune with Him, who leads so blessedly these praises. We must praise with Him on the ground of that blessedness in which He praises, or it is discord. Oh for a heart to know and, in some measure, to rise to that place and praise, which such touching and infinite grace gives us. Nothing can give a deeper, more subduing idea of the grace, the perfect grace, into which we are brought, and of the grace of Him who brought us there; of the complete deliverance and sure relationship which we enjoy, than Christ Himself leading our praises, as heard and entering into this place. What must His be? But it is in the midst of the congregation He praises. Oh that indeed by the Spirit our voices may be attuned to follow that praise, that leading, inspiring voice of Him, who has loved and not been ashamed to call us brethren; and is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. The degree of realization of joy, the sweetness and loudness of our joining note, depends, of course, on our spiritual state; but no note that is not founded on the perfect peace and joy of redemption is at all in tune there.

But we have seen that Christ's sufferings from man for righteousness brought judgment on man. His hand will find out all His enemies. But His sufferings from the hand of God for sin bring only blessing, the out-flowing of grace alone. This is remarkably shown in this 22nd Psalm. We have seen its character in the remnant of Israel, gathered by His grace, and who formed the nucleus of the Church, be they Jew or Gentile. Next, as it will be accomplished in the latter days, He turns to all Israel, that His praise may be in the great congregation. (Verses 23-26.) Next, the word goes forth to all the ends of the world, to bring them in to this blessed circle of praise. Are they fat of the earth, they eat and worship. Are they, be they who they may, those on whom death lies, who go down to the dust, (and no man can keep alive his own soul,) they must be witnesses of this mighty deliverance by the dying and risen Savior-that is when the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations. The seed that shall then have been spared shall serve him, and then it shall flow down to other generations. "They shall come, and shall declare unto a people that shall be born," this great and wondrous work of redemption, that that blessed, lowly, afflicted One " has done this." All is the fruit of redemption and victory. Judgment has stilled its voice. That great deed of atonement, of love and righteousness upon the cross, has left it silent and gone, to make room for the voice of unmingled praise.... It is not promise merely now. It is not that they shall be filled who hunger after righteousness; that the meek shall inherit. " They that fear the Lord are to praise Him, the meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that fear him, their hearts will live forever." Such is the blessed fruit of the perfect atonement for sin which that blessed One, forsaken of,

Jehovah-awful thought!-has accomplished for us; never so acceptable to Jehovah, never so perfect in obedience, as when, as to His soul, He suffered for us the forsaking of His wrath. Now the fruit, in unclouded light, is unmingled and unhindered praise, which He who had tasted and drank that dreadful cup of ours, first teaches us in the name of Father and God, in which He delights in righteousness and love, and then leads in the blessed chorus of praise, in which we shall adore forever and ever, His Father and our Father, His God and our God, in, and through, and with Him.

Now, it is for our hearts, through faith; hereafter Israel's, and the world's, and the people to be born, the universal Witnesses of the power of that work to reconcile and bless, when the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations. For us, though now in suffering, in a better

and heavenly way, but to His just praise then in all the earth.

FRIENDSHIP.

The Lord Jesus speaks of this privilege as belonging, through divine riches of grace, to His saints, when He says, " Henceforth I call you not servants' for the servant knoweth not what his lord 'doeth, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.' (John 15:15.)

This friendship, this communication of secrets, gives a wondrous sense of gracious and confiding intimacy. When we pray, we feel that we need something, when we serve, or when we worship, we judge that we owe something -at least that He is worthy - but when we are receiving communications -not commands as from a master, but, communications as from a friend-we listen, without any necessary reflection upon our own condition, freed of all sense of either need or obligation. Our proper attitude then is sitting-neither standing, like Martha, as to serve, nor kneeling, like Mary, to worship; but like Lazarus, sitting. (John 12)

The inspirations of a prophet are not equal to the communications which a friend receives; they do not intimate the same nearness or dignity. A prophet receives an inspiration as a vessel or oracle, and he may understand it or not; a friend learns secrets on the ground of personal confidence.

All the elect are, I grant, according to the grace and calling of God, endowed with this privilege; but among them, I believe, Abraham, Moses, David, and John had it very conspicuously. They illustrate it.

Abraham was told what the Lord was about to do with Sodom. " Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do," says the Lord; and then tells him of the business which was then taking him down to Sodom. (Gen. 18)

What a moment that was! The Lord had come to Abraham's tent at Mature, and there sat at his table and his feast. The Judge of Sodom was communicating with the conqueror of Sodom; the divine Judge of that vile, reprobate place, with him who bad already through faith and the victory of faith, refused all its offers. Again, I say, what a moment! and in the confidence which all this inspired, Abraham drew near and stood before the Lord, while the attendant angels withdrew and went on their way.

Full of blessing, indeed, this is. And so Moses in his day; for we read, " And the Lord spake with Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." (Ex. 33:11.)

Wonderful! The Lord dealt with Moses as a man will deal with his friend. He talked with him. (See v. 9.) We are not told what He said, because it is the business of the passage, rather to exhibit this grace of intimacy, or divine friendship, than to convey information to us. But we do learn the use which Moses makes of this gracious friendship, the very same use which Abraham of old had made of it. He speaks to the Lord about others, just as Abraham had 'done. He pleads for Israel as the patriarch had pleaded for Sodom. The Lord had approached Moses as His friend; He was not receiving him as His suitor or His debtor; it was fitting, therefore, that Moses should occupy the place and the moment in a manner which showed freedom from him-self.

And never, I may say, was Moses nearer to the Lord, not even when on Pisgah, He was showing the land to him in its length and breadth. Indeed, the two places were of like elevation, for the Lord was communicating to Moses in each of them. Here he "talked" with him, there He "showed" him. In spirit they were the same place, and that the highest; such as he and Elijah afterward filled on the holy mount-for there, as we again read, they "talked with Jesus." (Luke 9:30.)

And so David, as we see in 1 Chron. 17. David was a penitent, wearing sackcloth in the day of the plague, and going up Mount Olivet with dust on his head in the day of Absalom. He was a worshipper, too, singing and dancing, as he bore the ark of the Lord to Zion. But David was a friend, as Abraham and Moses had been. He received communications from the Lord through Nathan; and then, as one whom the Lord, in the ways of His grace, had thus endowed and privileged, "he went in," as we read, and "sat before the Lord." Beautiful and wonderful, but withal right. To have stood or to have knelt then would not have been obedient or holy-for holiness is consistency with God-and if He "mourn" we are to "lament;" if He "pipe" we are to "dance;" if He convict...and reprove us, we may be in sackcloth before Him; but if He deal with us face to face, as a man speaketh to a friend, we may and should sit before Him. But again, John was the nearest to Jesus at the last supper. He lay on His bosom. And thus it was he who reached the secrets of that bosom. Peter in the distance used John's nearness, and the Lord admitted its title, and gave him the privilege of it. John pressed that bosom afresh, in the confidence of an Abraham or a Moses, that the secret which was there would make itself his. (John 13:25.)

Surely all this tells us of the peculiar grace of this wondrous thing, this state end relationship of "friends" into which the Lord has called His saints. And we see the glorified saints in the full use and joy of this privilege; for on the holy hill (and to which I have already, in a passing way, alluded) Moses and Elias "talked" with Jesus. Sharing the glory, they knew the privileges of it, while Peter, beholding it, felt the power of it, saying, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

It is not to present something strange or striking that I notice all this, but rather to aid the soul in assuring itself of that love wherewith the elect are loved-a love which gives us a place where, forgetting both our need and our obligation, neither kneeling to supplicate nor standing to serve, we may sit to listen and receive communications, as a man is talked with by his friend. And when we see this to be a way of His grace, we may be still conscious of slowness of heart in ourselves; but we cannot but know that we are in possession of a love on God's part which passes knowledge.

And here, let me add, that this privilege or grace of friendship, of which we speak, is eminently ours. It is illustrated in the apostleship of Paul. Paul was let into the secret which had been "hid in God" before the world was, the good pleasure which God had taken in Himself. (Eph. And this was not inspiration as of a prophet merely; it was divine communication as to a friend. For Paul knew the secret and knew it for himself. This was more than a prophet. It was this ancient privilege of the elect, at which we have now been looking, but rising into its church-form, or fullness. In our apostle, and so in us, this privilege takes us into strange and excellent intimacy. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." And accordingly we "sit," as David of old did, or as Lazarus of Bethany did, but it is in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6.)

This excelleth. Friendship, as we have seen, is no new form of grace. It has been among the privileges of the elect from the beginning. But with us it has peculiar elevation, as everything else has that belongs to the Church.

Saw Ye Him Whom My Soul Loveth?

Song of Solomon 5

Note that when the bride, through her slothfulness, or rather security, has caused her beloved to depart, she does not try to hide this and to seem to beholders as if she were in His love. No, there is thorough honesty. For He was her all, and if He was gone, it was a real grief and loss. Beholders were nothing to her-it was Himself she sought. Her fellowship was a real thing, and the loss real too. To find Him again was her great concern.

Sketches of Scripture Characters

Under this title it is intended to present, in a continued series, some brief remarks on the various individuals noticed in scripture as having intercourse with God, and under the gracious dealings of His hand.

It is not intended, however, to notice these individuals so much in any typical character, or in relation to any offices they may have sustained, as to trace them in the individuality of their exercises and experience, and the molding of their characters as the result of their intercourse with God. This, if rightly pursued, may become the means of the deepest instruction and profit to our souls, while, at the same time, it opens a pathway of profoundest interest in connection with the perfect and living ways of the Lord.

In human biography, or the recorded experience of holy men, there is always this defect, that the estimate of the character of divine intercourse, and of its effects upon the soul, is necessarily imperfect. Intercourse with the Lord may indeed have been true and real, and the effects of His dealings with the soul marked and manifest; still there are a thousand mists and prejudices, in the judging and recording mind, which may operate to hinder their faithful transcription for the contemplation and benefit of others. But here all is unerringly marked. And if the records are brief, there is nothing aside from the purpose; nothing either in excess or defect when viewed in the light in which they were dictated by the Holy Spirit and left for our instruction.

There may be a danger, it is true, of giving to even these records the poor coloring of human thoughts, and the only preservation from this is the sense of the Lord's presence in the soul and the remembrance that they are His recorded ways that we seek to investigate, though they are unfolded in His dealings with men of like passions with ourselves. The result of this will be the wholesome determination that where divine light ceases the imagination shall be refused the rein.

Sketches of Scripture Characters: Abel

Abel's history cannot be taken up altogether apart, since it is designedly presented to us in scripture in opposition to Cain's in its principles, and fruits, and final results. In the two there is a contrasted exhibition of righteousness and iniquity, and their correspondent fates in the world, now under the power of sin. This is the more striking as it occurs in the first two individuals of the human race which were born after the fall. But, as to the springs of life and action, it may be said that Abel's history and Cain's stretch on to the end, and characterize the two families which divide the world. They present also the irreversible opposition of righteousness and sin, and lay open the sources of the one and of the other in faith and unbelief.

Faith is the recorded characteristic of Abel's history, which, after sin had come in, was the only possible link of connection with God, the only possible ground of acceptance and pathway of restoration to His favor. For what does the fall present, according to the truth of God's character and word, in regard to man's original position in innocence and on the grounds of nature? Is it not this-expulsion from Eden-sin which God will not associate himself with-and death? And who that believes this but must either sink in hopeless despair when looking at himself, or find his hope and confidence in looking upward to the restoring power and grace of God?

But fallen man is a proud being-proud under any circumstances-and likes not to surrender the position that once was his, but which sin has forfeited. The fall that cast him down from his innocence has not quenched his ambition; and he would seek to maintain his place before God on grounds that involve the entire setting aside of His judgment of sin, and the utter subversion of His moral character as judge.

Cain's ground of approach to God is an example of this. For, with all that had so recently taken place in Eden, and with the consequences of the fall daily before his eyes, he nevertheless rushes into God's presence, and there seeks to be accepted, as if there had been no fall, no sin, no penalty of death as God's judgment of sin! He comes without faith, without confession, without blood-shedding, without a sacrifice to mark his subjection to death, without a single recognition of God's judgment of sin or a thought that " He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" and yet he hopes to be accepted! But every man who seeks to have to do with God on any ground but that of the sacrifice of Christ, of which Abel's was a type, but copies the example of Cain, only under the aggravating circumstances of increased light and testimony from God. When death is not owned as God's judgment of sin, any expectation of restoration to His favor is only based upon the vain hope that God will falsify His word and that He will recede from the solemn judgment He has declared. For if I own that my life is forfeited under the just judgment of God for sin, it is plain that all hope in myself is forever gone, and I am cast in faith on the death of Christ, by which sin's penalty has in grace been met.

But what in truth does Cain seek in coming with his bloodless offering before the Lord? Does he seek, and long, for restored intercourse with God because His favor is delighted in? Not in the least. He is satisfied with his position in a world of sin, and if he may but be allowed to enjoy the

fruits of his toil, all that he seeks in intercourse with God is that he may obtain the divine sanction to his thoughts of himself, and thus silence the accusations of conscience and dissipate his fears.

And what does man's religion always seek? Not communion with God; not subjection to His word and will; not the sense of His light and favor to cheer the soul in a world of evil while looking onward, beyond the world and death, to an eternal dwelling in His presence! No: but it would pursue its own course in the world, without a thought in common with God, as to the world's condition, or man's estate before Him, and then by some sacrifices, or services, or fruits of nature, would bind Him over to an approval of the worshipper's condition, and character, and aims. It would make self and not God its end, and then blindly seek to attach to its self-deceivings the sanction of --God's approval and name!

Abel; on the contrary, by faith reads in the light of God's thoughts the sad history of the fall. He forgets neither his sin nor its penalty; but in his offering he puts death between himself and God, as the just judgment of sin. But death thus owned feeds his hopes, and the divine acceptance of his person and gifts takes the place of every earthly tie and every spring of earthly blessing. For Abel is not here presented to us as a sinner seeking for pardon, but as a believer in intercourse with God, and his offering is the embodiment of his faith, as Cain's is of his unbelief. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to His offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Each brought his character as well as his offering before the Lord; and Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous," which was the formal reception of man back again into the place of divine favor. "God testified of his gifts, and by it be being dead yet speaketh." It was this revelation to his soul that formed his character as a witness for righteousness in the presence of the evil and hostility of the world, which is provoked by it: for Cain's spirit is the spirit of the world.

The ground of righteousness before God, which Abel's faith lays hold of, is plain; but there is, further, the life of practical righteousness, which results from the faith that allies with God and brings into happy subjection to His will.

It was the blood of "righteous Abel" that Cain shed; and not merely of accepted Abel. For God in his person had raised a living testimony to righteousness in the world, where sin has its course, in the harmony of Abel's spirit with His own character, who is "the righteous Lord that loveth righteousness." And it was tills, we are told, that provoked Cain's hatred of his brother and his murder. For the scripture says, "Cain was of that wicked one who slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." Faith wrought in Abel separation from nature's path, or the world's course (in principle) in the power of divine approval; and this awakens the hostility of the world, so that he meets death not as the consequence of sin, but as a witness for righteousness. His death becomes a sacrifice to righteousness, as his life was a life of faith, a life of hope in God as the God of resurrection, as well as the vindicator of righteousness which now had no place on earth.

Abel is, in this respect, a type of Christ, as suffering for righteousness, as Cain is a type of the world in crucifying Christ. But "the blood of sprinkling," through God's love in the gift of Christ, "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Abel's earthly occupation and pursuits were also in accordance with his heavenly character and hopes; for we may speak of his heavenly character in contrast with Cain's, who had his home and

interests on earth. " Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." Both were lawful occupations; and the culture of the ground had now become, in a sense, necessary to man, who had no longer his home in paradise. But the eye of faith in Abel, looks upon the earth as the scene of the curse; and no results which labor may win by the cultivation of the reluctant soil, can take from his mind the thought that the very necessity for toil came in with the incoming of sin. In Eden and in a state of innocence, labor and the sweat of the brow had no place. Abel wanders with his flock, and his earthly necessities are met by that which is nourished by the dews and rain from heaven, and not by his laborious toil. He goes from place to place, as the pasturage of his flock demands - a wanderer in the world, having no immovable property to encumber him, or laborious improvements to attach him to an embellished home on earth. Cain tills the ground, as a settler in the world; and his toil, when rewarded with increase, brings no token to his mind of the presence of sin. The sweat of his brow to him is but the effect of honorable toil, and the fruits which his industry raises, are in his estimation, a token of the divine favor and blessing. This may seem a fatuity in Cain, almost beyond the power of conception; but it must be remembered that though the penalty of death had been pronounced upon Adam's sin, Adam still lived. And unbelief, which would credit the declaration, "thou shalt not surely die," might easily persuade itself that while the sinner lived there was no proof that the penalty incurred would ever be exacted. And we know who has said, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

But restored intercourse with God is Abel's power to judge of things around him, as it meets also the longing desires of his renewed spirit. For communion with God produces a double effect upon the character; it conforms to God in the love of holiness, and separates from the world which is in contrariety to Him, and governed by principles altogether at variance with those which He approves. Faith no more surely connects the soul with God, and gives discernment of His mind, than it forces into a path in direct opposition to the world.

Abel the righteous is cut off from the earth, and leaves neither name nor posterity there; for his record is on high. But to Cain is given a history of worldly exploits, and a distinguished posterity-for unbelief and unrighteousness have their natural descent; but faith and righteousness are not found apart from their object and their source. Evil sustains and propagates itself, and has dominion in the earth; but righteousness is only found as sustained by Him who is its spring, while its home is above, and its hope in the " glory that fadeth not away.

Sketches of Scripture Characters. Enoch

Abel, the example of righteousness and of its fate in this world, we have seen cut off by the hand of violence, while Cain the murderer, " who was of that wicked one and slew his brother," lived on and became the progenitor of a race distinguished by all the characteristics and aims of the men of this world. They were " the men of the world, who have their portion in this life;" the "men of progress" of their day. And accordingly they are celebrated for their energy in the building of cities, and the arts and embellishments of life have their birth-place amongst them. But faith looks to the future and unseen world, and expects the triumph of righteousness here only as the result of the judgment of the wicked who have corrupted the earth. Hence the posterity of Seth are marked only by the principle of their separation from the apostasy of Cain and his family. (" Then began men to call on the name of the Lord," or to call themselves by the name of the Lord.) And besides this testimony, their history is only a record that they lived their days on earth, and died, leaving no monuments of their fame or traces of their greatness on the earth. Their "record was on high."

Enoch, " the seventh from Adam," was of this family, and is distinguished by his separation unto God, and by his testimony of the coming of the Lord to judge the wicked of the earth, and by the victory over death which closed his walk with God on earth and was the crowning triumph of his faith. "Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him." "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Adam, as the result of his sin, was driven out from the presence of the Lord; Cain in his worldly-mindedness voluntarily left that presence; but Enoch's record is, that he walked with God-not in a paradise as Adam, but in the midst of the increasing evil of the world and in the common everyday circumstances of ordinary life. He walked with God on earth, and God took him to dwell with himself in heaven. Blessed and triumphant issue of a life of faith and of a separated walk with God!

One effect of Enoch's walk with God is seen in his being made the depository of His counsels, as Abraham also was in a later day. " The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" But Lot, who was indeed delivered from the judgment of Sodom, which was revealed to Abraham and awakened in him the spirit of intercession, was not near enough to the Lord to receive his communications-those blessed pledges of His confidence as well as tokens of His condescension and grace. Enoch testified of the coming of the Lord, and of the judgment it would bring upon the wickedness by which he was surrounded, and from which, in spirit and conduct, he was separated by the power of faith that associated him in his walk with Him, concerning whose coming and judgment he witnessed. Though, doubtless, the flood was the immediate and proximate judgment on which his testimony bore, the Spirit of the Lord shows it reached beyond this to the Lord's coming with His saints to judge that evil and apostasy at the close of the present dispensation, of which the epistle of Jude so solemnly speaks. Unlike Noah, whose faith carried him through the judgment of the old world, Enoch's faith rested in the hope of translation from the

scene of evil on which the judgment was about to fall. He sees the judgment coming, and warns of its approach, saying, " Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment," &c.; but the rest of his own heart is found in a daily walk with God, in moral separation from all that was bringing on the judgment, and in the certain hope of being with God when it was executed.

So conversant are we with corruption and decay, and all the consequences of sin, that there is something wonderful in the thought of being taken, without the intervention of death, in our own persons, and living, from the scenes of this world, into the presence of God in that world where He manifests Himself apart from all evil in the goodness of His own eternal nature. But this is the very hope-and form of its accomplishment-which is set before us in the reception of the gospel. We are converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. "We shall not all sleep." "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Perfect is that victory which Christ the Lord of life has gained over death, so that He can say, " I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Still, to be effective in the soul, Enoch's hope must be coupled with Enoch's walk. Who can question that the practical effect of those words, "so shall we ever be with the Lord," is neutralized too often in the heart, by the lack of those affections toward the Lord, and of that confidence in Him which are alone awakened by an habitual walk with Him? How can the heart long for the presence of God in heaven that is not at home in His presence habitually through grace on earth?

But there are two things which are essential to a walk with God; (for I am supposing that the heart is established with grace:) a knowledge of His character and will as revealed to faith, and an apprehension according to the judgment of God of the moral character of the scene around. If I am to " walk with God," I must have a heart at rest in His presence through grace, and also affections and desires which can find their satisfaction in the known and apprehended character of God-a heart that can delight in the contemplation of His goodness, and that can take pleasure in intercourse with Him as the eternal portion of the soul. Then also there is the reflective influence of this walk with God in the soul's moral judgment of things. " If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Consequently a walk with God necessitates a separation in heart and spirit from the course of this world. The action of divine grace which puts the soul in relationship with God at first, is characterized as a deliverance from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father; (Gal. 1:4;) or, in the words of Christ, " I have chosen you out of the world," (John 15:19,) and never can the subsequent walk with God, in the scene from which grace has delivered us, be in contradiction to this fundamental principle. And surely nothing can be more interesting than to see a man surrounded by evil and corruption, and in the midst of the trials and difficulties of common every-day life, with his heart so raised above everything around him, as to show that his resources are in God Himself, and his whole spirit, and conduct, and ways, molded and regulated by his walk with God, and by a reference to His will. For we must remember that in this testimony concerning Enoch and his faith, it was not that his person and worship were accepted, as in the case of Abel, but that his walk was sanctified and molded according to the perfect will of God. " For before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God." His faith was not exercised merely with

regard to the exigencies and circumstances of this life-in which lower walk of faith, alas! so many fail-but in raising his soul above these circumstances so as to be able to walk in harmony of spirit with God. And yet, on the other hand, there is the simple record of his earthly associations, in his having had sons and daughters, that we might not fail to see the one side and the other of our walk in this world with God. And it is observable that the declaration in Heb. 11:5, that Enoch, " before his translation, had this testimony that he pleased God," gives occasion to the statement, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Or, in other words, the faith which leads to a walk with God is not conversant with abstract truths, but with God Himself; and it leaves not the soul at a distance from God, but brings into living, habitual contact with His infinite goodness, so that His being, and character, and moral dealings, are living and eternal realities.

The Strength of Sin Is the Law

As long as I am under law in any sense or measure, I am under the power of sin. And the most insidious way in which one is under law is for holiness, and not for pardon-although in truth there is not peace, for holiness is sought for in order to it. There is a feeling that God is not pleased with us because we are not good enough, or because we are not so good as we ought to be. That is thorough legality. It is entire forgetfulness of Christ. It is seeking for fruits in us, in order to commend us to God. And it shows itself in the want of rest in the soul because of what we are; that is, the soul is not simply on Christ. Christ may be known as a Savior from wrath and condemnation, and the soul be seeking, now that it is saved, to clothe itself before God with the fruits of the life that He has given. And inasmuch as these are never an adequate covering before Him, there is a feeling of fear and a consciousness of not having that which can commend us to Him; and so the soul gets of Christ entirely, and into bondage, thus looking at the fruits of the Spirit as our covering, and not Christ, and looking for these to cover, and not at Him who has covered' us all of His grace.

The soul has not come to the end of itself: it has not come to know that it is as powerless for good as it was alive for evil, and that Christ is my covering, my robe, now, just as I am, and that all my fruits will never add one ray to His glory as my robe-that I am perfect through His comeliness put upon me, as much as, if in Him, as when displayed in glory. O the heavenly joy and peace there is found in knowing Christ as thus made of God to us righteousness; not merely having forgiveness in Him, but this perfect righteousness, in which I am not only spotless, but comely in the eyes of God! Now in all these legal experiences Christ is not known thus. Hence the experiences.

Suffering for Christ and Chastening

Hebrews 12:1-13

In the former chapter the Apostle has been speaking of the various forms which faith took in the midst of the trials and difficulties through which the saints of old times had to pass; whether the patience which waited for the accomplishment of promise, or the energy which overcame the difficulties of the way, closing it with the distinct and definite contrast between them and ourselves. In what follows he is applying this for our encouragement in the race which is before us. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the rest ran a part of this race of faith, and died in faith that is, did not receive the promises. But if we look at Jesus, we see one who has get to the end of the course, and as regards His personal glory, He has got the promised joy. Besides, He has run the whole course of faith, gone through every trial of it; begun and finished it. You never can find yourself in any place of trial, where a believer can be found, that Christ has not been: in it. He has trod the whole path, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. There is where the road leads to; so do not give up the cross. Jesus has borne it and has sat down there. It is worth running for. He came, no doubt, in divine love, but He walked in the path in which we have to walk, with all the motives which sustain and cheer us. He had before Him the joy of being before God in that blessed place. What comfort, in the path of difficulty and trial, to see that He has trodden it all, and was sustained in fit all in the very way we are, by the joy of -doing God's will and in dependence on Him.

" Wherefore let us lay aside every weight." It seems here as if the Apostle treated the difficulties we feel, very lightly; but, if we weigh the words, we shall be led into the blessed secret which made affliction light and the path a plain one for, him. If a thing is a mere weight it is easy to lay it aside. If my eye is single and the only thing I care for is the race, it is felt only as a weight and it is easy to throw hindrances. away. When it is otherwise with us it is difficult, felt to be impossible; but it is not because of the power of the thing, but because we are caring for it. We do not cling to weights, when they are only weights, in a race we desire to win. If you are talking of a sacrifice, you are talking of your love to the thing you are going to sacrifice. When the eye is singly set on the object before us, whatever hinders is as dross for oneself, because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

This, then, is the secret of the Apostle's seemingly strange language. For it does seem strange, to a heart burdened and trammled with conflicts and distracting circumstances inter, woven with all its movements, to be told in a short sentence, You have only to throw them aside. The question lies within. The heart is divided. The weight which burdens its strength and the cords which entangle the feet are loved weights and cherished cords. The question is inside the things that beset it. It lies in the state of the heart itself. The moment all else is dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, it is easy to understand and to do what the apostle says. There is no great sacrifice in getting rid of dross and dung-one is glad of it. It has to be done, but it is easy to do it, and the weight itself is gone-the snare is broken. A heart, through grace, filled with

Christ for His own sake, is the secret of running the race to win Christ.

But this supposes the whole truth of the certainty of redemption, The race begins by redemption. All experiences before that are the experiences, not of a race; but experiences to know whether God will have me. If I am going to run to Canaan and I do not know whether God will have me at the end, I shall run very uncertainly; but if redeemed and set in the race by Jesus, I shall run in liberty and joy; for He is my object at the end as well as my pattern along the way.

In what follows we get instruction on another point. It is this, that all along the way we pass towards the rest in glory, God is exercising our hearts to make us partakers of His holiness: This supposes a life which has desires according to the divine holiness and can partake of and enjoy it: that which is in its nature holy. We have already seen that it supposes redemption, True desert-work with God, that work in which God humbles us and suffers us to hunger, and feeds us with manna, that we may know what is in our heart, that He may do us good at the latter end, is after the Red Sea. Experiences there were before, but they ended in being shut up by judgment and of pressed by terror. The salvation of God was shown there. Experiences after that were with God, who had redeemed them and when there was an end of belonging to Egypt. Slavery went before. Desert patience and proving what was in the heart and Canaan conflicts followed after the full; deep, complete bringing out of what they heart of man is with God. But these exercises have a double character, as we shall now see. "Ye hate not," says the passage, yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Here we have two principles which nothing but the Spirit of God could connect; first; resisting unto blood, that was in suffering for Christ; and secondly, at the same time suffering in a conflict against sin, and by which it is practically judged in us. God connects our striving against sin with suffering for Christ; resisting unto blood is dying for Christ, but as this is in the conflict With sin, it cannot be truly carried on When the principle of sin and our own Will is active in us. Hence this same suffering serves as discipline, and so in the next verse it is added, " My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." Who would think of God's chastening us at the very time We were suffering for Christ? But so it is, for self is so subtle; it mixes itself up even with suffering for Christ, and hinders our service, and we may fear even to dishonor rather than to serve Him. We are apt to get discouraged when we have thus to judge ourselves in the midst of conflict and, it may be tempted to sit down and do nothing at all. The judgment of self is right, but not the discouragement. Suppose I am serving Christ, and that I get discouraged in the warfare. Whence is this? Confidence in my own misuse of power-want of faith in God's working His own work. Now what is God doing here? God is using it to exercise me so as to judge self. There is not a step of our lives that is not part of the process in which God is dealing with us. Before deliverance at the Red Sea it is a process to break down flesh so as to cast me over on the salvation of God. After this deliverance it is a system of experiences to exercise me along with God. The question of deliverance never arises again, but there is a quantity of things to be judged that I may enjoy that for which I am delivered. It is hence., forth a question of communion with God.

In Moses we have an example of these two things; he was suffering for Christ and suffering for his flesh too at one and the same time. The Spirit of God (Heb. 11:24-26) tells us of the bright path of faith in which he was walking when he came among the children of Israel; yet the flesh accompanies him here, and with a mixture of human energy, nourished by the position he had been in, he slays the Egyptian. God surely allowed this that the breach might be complete; but he

does now fear the wrath of the king. In doing it he looks this way and that way, and when it is known, flies. He was in the main suffering for Christ-bearing the reproach of Christ most blessedly, but much had to be purged out and subdued in him, and if he had to flee because he had identified himself with the people of God, he had to flee that forty years' discipline might wear him from all confidence in human strength. When that is gone, we see how little courage flesh can have in the presence of difficulty. Now, though flesh had indeed shown its weakness, he can be a god unto Pharaoh. Something like this is the case of Peter, only here it was, alas! with an open and dreadful fall. He truly loved the Lord, but he had confidence in the flesh, in himself, yea, in spite of the Lord's warning as to the sifting of Satan and as to himself. Entering into the temptation he dreadfully denies the Lord. This was an extreme case, no doubt. Yet love to the Lord led him, mixed with false confidence in the flesh, which had to be humbled in this dreadful manner. The Lord lets him go through the process that he may learn himself, and what flesh is, and is worth, and where perfect grace is to be found; and then when converted, that is, his soul restored, he is to strengthen his brethren. If the flesh is not judged, the very effect of the zeal we have is to put us in the place where it comes to be known, and judged.

In Paul, too, we see the same thing. A thorn in the flesh is given him, lest he should be exalted above measure. We see in him the action of devotedness in the divine life, and the action of the flesh kept down by that which would make him despicable in his preaching. (See Gal. 4:13, 14.) When the Apostle thus suffered, felt the thorn, he was really suffering for Christ; yet it was the needed keeping down of flesh. This is the effect of that wondrous grace which employs those who have yet to learn for themselves, as vessels of divine glory and truth to teach others. The vessel must be dealt with, as well as employed. God, in a certain sense, having given occasion to Paul's danger by the abundance of revelations granted to him, secures him from the danger, but by the known and needed spiritual process which is carried on in every soul, though by various means.

How precious is this constant care of God! He is always going on with us. The Hebrews were getting worldly, and persecution comes. It is suffering for Christ, and yet for sin. And the hand of God is there to give through it all senses exercised to discern good and evil. The work is going on, though I do not know all that is going on until afterward. When the work is done, I get more spiritual, and am then able to see what God was doing all the while. His own work He will carry on for His own glory. The chastening is not always for transgression, but if not, it is for the principle that produces it, or that would produce it, for it may not do so. (compare Job 33:17; 36:9.)

If we look at Israel in the desert, how constant and unceasing the care of God over them! Their foot did not swell, neither did their garments wax old. God was taking care of the very nap of their garments, but taking care at the same time not to minister to self. So in Deut. 8 we see they were to be in constant dependence. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness,... and he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, (which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know,) that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." It was on the one hand that they might know what was in their heart, and on the other, that man lived by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. An humbled and dependent self, and a God who guided them and met their every need. Where was the way in the wilderness? There was no way. And so Moses says, "Show me now," not a way, but "thy way, that I may know thee." Thus he comes to know God as well as himself. And even in the land there

is the same tender care. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God," &c. The danger was not of forgetting the land but God. "Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," &c. In the actual and real enjoyment of our highest blessings, flesh does not work. There is no mixture. When Paul was in the third heavens, there was no need of a thorn, but when he came down, there was the danger of flesh beginning to work about the blessing. When we are walking in this new life, flesh has no part in it; Satan and the world have nothing to offer. Before deliverance; holiness is flight from sin, instead of enjoying God, so it is called "the bread of affliction." (Deut. 16:3.) It presses on the spirit until delivered. When delivered, God leads us through the great and howling wilderness where there is not a drop of water, and feed us with manna, to humble us and to prove us, to do us good at our latter end.

What patient grace! Never with drawing His eyes from us; exercising; us to give the full perfect judgment of flesh in the power of the cross of Christ; that all the will, and movement, and activity of the flesh may be' dead,-not in the sense of our being dead and risen, for we can always say that,-but practically. This is what we have in 2 Cor. 4:10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." This is the settled purpose of heart, through grace, of the Apostle, to hold himself dead as regards all that was of nature, according to the power of the death of Christ. Then it is added, " For we which live, are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake;" so that there is not only the purpose of heart in the Apostle in keeping the flesh dead, but God delivering to it. Thus Paul is put down, so that not a bit of him as a man is flesh should be there, but the life of Jesus manifest in his mortal flesh. " So, then, death worketh in us, but life in you:" that is, the power of this Christ which wrought in him as death as regards the flesh, being thus freed and delivered from it in its outward operations; wrought as life in others. The fact that the work was practically complete in Paul as bearing always about the dying, caused that the life of Christ was the only thing working in them. In the measure in which the vessel is put to death, in so far does life work. Such a writer as Thomas a-Kempis, however sincere, begins all at the wrong end. He seeks first to die in order to live. This cannot be. In the power of what life are we to die? Life is first. "We who live are alway delivered unto death;" that is, life must precede death. The great blessing is fellowship with God. But, as a matter of fact, there is, in virtue of this, the judgment I form of myself reflectively, and this is of great importance. I am enabled to joy in God in loathing myself, though I may not have always to think of the self I loathe. This is not merely conversion; but, being converted, looking at myself in the presence of God's love. That is repentance. It is the real judgment of good and evil which is in the divine nature, with this difference, that the evil is in myself. Repentance is the holiness of God's nature applied to the judgment of self in its full extent in the presence of God's love. If I do enjoy God with an exercised heart, the effect is to make me discover all that is not light in myself, and I judge it along with God. I am separated from that bit of flesh which I judge. Oh! it is blessed work, and delivering work; for whenever I judge evil along with God. I am delivered from the evil. In all these exercises, the object of God is to do us good at our latter end. We judge of circumstances by their pleasantness or unpleasantness, God by the good of the end. The reason we do not like them is, that we like our own will, and that is the very reason why God sends them.

In verse 5, we have two things, Do riot despise the chastening, and do not faint under it. First, Do not despise it. If you are under chastening there is always a reason for it, for God is love and does not afflict willingly. It will not do to say, I am suffering for Christ. That is very good, but God is not dealing with goodness in chastening, although to bring out goodness. He is dealing with flesh. Take Jacob. God does not let Esau get near him, but He takes him in hand Himself. Jacob feared Esau, because he had not walked with God; but he did not rightly fear God. God met his faith which was true, and would not allow Esau to touch him any more than He did Laban: But if He preserved him froth the hostility of his enemy, it was to deal with him much More closely about his ways and heart, and so the "man" wrestled with him first. Here, how ever, God did not reveal Himself He sustained his faith and blessed him: At Bethel, when all the idols had been put away, God begins by revealing Himself, and calls him, 'Israel,' as if He had never done so. So now is everything even which we have already in such a case with God.

The second thing is; Do not faint when rebuked, for all is in love. It is love putting us through the process of working out that which is hindering. Do not despise, there is reason for chastening. Do not faint, it is love which chastens.

" Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall- we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Here there is another principle besides confidence in the love of Him who chastens, and that is, reverence. There is a reverence for His divine title over us. God's hand is upon me, and I bow Under it. There is a majesty in it which has its place. Even Christ bowed under the government of God.

Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Purging is not that which is in question here, but the Submission of the Will-another part Of the "divine lesson. It may not be a particular fault, it may be independence of spirit that has to be judged; but He governs. Angels See this. "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels." " We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to Men." There is not a step of our lives which is not a part of this spectacle. It is not this merely the good that is done to us that is the effect of these dealings of God, but there is subjection to the Father of spirits. He has this title over us, and we bow to Him. No doubt He does it in perfect love to us, but there is a public government of God. " Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days."

" For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but be for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Here we get another blessed revelation as to God. His heart is always working for our profit. And what is that? Is it merely that I must be holy? Far otherwise. It is not saying, you must have holiness to come to me, but grace, making us partakers of God's holiness. God would have our mind and everything wrought out into what He is. And what a kind of joy we should have in God when made partakers of His holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous." If I am correcting my child, it is not joyous to him, nor meant to be so. "Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." What makes us not to be peaceable? It is always our thinking of self. A man is peaceable when his spirit is not hankering after anything. When we have been exercised by the chastening, the new nature produces its fruits in the ungrieved power of the Holy Ghost, and in our hearts we are peaceable. Joy is

sudden, something that arises up in our hearts and may sink down again and disappear, it is high and low; but peace is always even. The affections are quietly settled in God, peacefully confiding in Him.

" Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down." Do not be discouraged. It is God who is working, and working in love; and He will do all that is needed to make you partaker of His holiness. Then there is spiritual activity and energy. How perfect His grace! "He with draweth not His eyes from the righteous." How much He has to bear with us! What petty pride, what levity! But He has planted a precious seed, and therefore He never ceases to cherish it.

That Good Part Which Shall Not Be Taken Away

Luke 10:38-42

In the closing part of this chapter, we see that the one great thing was to hear Christ's word. This we learn from the approval given to Mary above Martha, who, in a certain sense, was doing a very good thing, for she received Him into her house, and served Him. But there is something better than this, and "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." In a certain sense, there ought to be laboring to serve Christ, but it is a much better thing to be listening to Himself. The Lord would have His words enter, and have power in the heart.

The only thing that endures forever is the word of the Lord. The wisdom of this world is against it; human reasoning is against it; but the word of God is the only thing worth waiting upon diligently. If a Christian is real coning about circumstances, instead of appealing to the word-"Thus saith the Lord"-he is sure to be going down in his own soul. The principle insisted on in this closing narrative of the chapter is the same as that which the Lord taught when He said, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven," in contrast to demons being subject to them. We want the word in our hearts, and to be sitting at Christ's feet.

Religiousness is amiable enough for this world, but that will not enter heaven. We must have Christ in our hearts; for the world is fading away, and only he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

It was through sitting at the feet of Jesus that Mary so learned to anticipate His death, and the value of His person, as to cause her to take the ointment of spikenard, and, in the full affection of her heart, to expend it in anointing His feet. For Mary alone anointed His body for the burying; and we do not find her at the sepulcher, nor yet at the cross. She thought only of resurrection, because she knew that men's souls were ruined, and that He came to deliver them.

The thing pressed in these verses is not so much that Martha was cumbered in preparing a meal, but that Mary was hearing the word. For the great thing the Lord delighted in was the hearing ear for His word. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." God was now by His own word bringing in truth to people's souls. Of course, they might have their ears closed against it; but that is another thing. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Christ was the living word; and He says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The truth sets everything in its right place, or it is not truth. It sets all in the full light of God. Truth sets man in his place, or it is not truth. It sets sin in its place, or it is not truth. It sets righteousness in its place, or it is not truth. It sets love in its place, or it is not truth. And it sets God in His place, or it is not truth. In one sense, truth never came until Christ came; for I do not tell the truth about God, unless I tell that He is love; and that never came out till Christ came. The law said nothing about it; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Everything was morally set right by Him. I do not may that men saw it. The law is put in contrast with what Christ came to declare. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The written word is now the instrument of revealing truth. The law was holy, just, and good, because it was of God. The law convicted men of sin, but itself was not truth in this way. It told men what they ought to do; but while it told men 'that they ought to love God with all their heart, it told nothing in itself of what man was. But what man ought to be, it did tell. "This do and thou shalt live." It did not tell man he was a lost sinner, and could not do it; it did not tell man what was his condition; it told nothing of the truth in this way; it merely gave an abstract thought of what man ought to be. Neither did the law tell what God was; for the law in itself was merely the abstract hypothetical principle that " the man that doeth these things shall live by them." Of course, I need not say that man could' not do them, and therefore the law was I not the truth-this came by Jesus Christ. Christ comes in as the light' and says, you are all dead in sin, but I can give you life-that is truth. He says, God is love, and God has manifested His love to a poor, sinful, lost-world, or wherefore am I here? That is truth. Christ's coming into the world showed how everything stood in the world, and put everything in its true place, both as to man and God. His coming showed that Jew, as well as Gentile, were alike slaves to sin and Satan, and that the truth was needed to make them free. Therefore Christ came, not only in grace and truth, but in love also, for He came to bring home to the heart and conscience of man his real state before God, and to show the remedy. Christ was the living word. He comes in testimony, and tells what God was-not now in redemption, but in testimony. Therefore of what value to Him was Martha's cumbered service, in comparison of a soul, whom He had come to save, listening to His word? It is just the same now with a Christian. When God's word comes, it has a title over man's heart to make him believe it. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." His word has its claim on the hearts of those who hear it, and when received it is life. It makes its way by its own authority to the soul. There is no living power in a miracle to put life into a man's soul, but there is living power in the word. And there is never a soul saved but by the word of God; for it is the word that tells of the blood shed in redemption. A person may believe because of miracles. Many did in that day, but Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because it was merely a natural conviction on the mind, without any living power in the soul. It must be Christ in the heart; and it is by the word that any Soul can get into heaven. By the word of God a soul is quickened; for we are begotten by the word, and if the word cannot do it, it will never be done. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." Suppose we could set to work and do a miracle, it would not quicken one soul.

But the word of God also puts men under responsibility. "The word that I have spoken the same shall judge you in the last day." So also it is the "Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Thus we have seen that the quickening power of the word of God is put in contrast with miracles; so that a faith founded, an miracles, as such, is less than nothing and vanity, having no life in it; for it is not in the power of any miracle to convert or quicken a soul.

There are three things constantly pressed in connection with the power of the word of God. First, the word spoken will come against men another day. Secondly, though "perilous times" come, the word of God "is able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." Thirdly, in a soul that is quickened by the word of God, the moral effect is to make it dependent and obedient. "Sanctified to obedience." Dependence is the characteristic of the new man. The old man would be independent, doing his own will; the new man counts upon God. The Lord's perfectness as a man was His entire dependence on God. He was God, of course; but being found in fashion as a man, He was dependent, and therefore we find Him, at the 'beginning of this chapter, as in other

parts of Luke's gospel, "praying," which is the expression of dependence. And so also in Saul of Tarsus, when his own independent will was broken, we have the same expression of dependence. "Behold he prayeth." (Acts 9:11.) When the haughtiness of his will was subdued, his language was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From that moment God had His proper place in Paul's soul. Thus do we get the force of the declaration, " But one thing is needful: and Mary bath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

To What Were Ye Baptized?

It is very true there are individual and common short comings, but to have God's end before us is most needful from first to last. It is last in execution, but that is always the thing first in intention. Moreover, it guides all intermediate steps and means, which, if not convergent to the end, are either wrong, or, if right and appointed, have been deprived of their use, and turned to man's self-exaltation: witness all ecclesiastical things, sacraments, (so called,) &c.; and anything that does not minister Christ, and to Christ, in us, the hope of glory, is aside God's purpose. The rule of a family, the needful works of life, child-bearing, all are places and circumstances of exercise of the grace of eternal life. Confession of the kingdom, as well as the rejoicing in the grace, is needful; and I am sure those who fail in these will suffer loss in that day. The use of the assembly is not answered, if this end is not understood. Worship is, on its own ground, as heavenly, but the assembly for these things is on the earth, and its obligations one to another are on this ground, with confession and prayer. "To what were ye baptized?" is a proper question to ask on this behalf.

Tomorrow

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matt. 6:34.)

Does each day upon its wing,

Its allotted burden bring?

Load it not besides with sorrow

Which belongeth to the morrow.

Strength is promised, strength is given,

When the heart by God is riven;

But foredate the day of woe,

And alone thou bear'st the blow.

One thing only claims thy care;

Seek thou first by faith and prayer

That all-glorious world above,

Scene of righteousness and love;

And whate'er thou need'st below,

He thou trustest will bestow.

Tradition of the Elders

Matthew 15

In the commencement of this chapter, we have the self-satisfaction of poor blind opposers of blessing, seeing no source of blessing higher than "the elders," and no need deeper than external washing. They knew not that the source is in God, and the need in our hearts, and that worship must spring from hearts where blessing has been received. If the commandments of the elders are set up, then the commandments of God will be made vain; and if cleansing is in externals, then the heart is left filthy, and is far from God. Here, in religious zeal itself, the character of the ungodly is manifested; "God is not in all their thoughts." It is not, 'Why do you transgress the commandment of God?' but 'Why do you transgress the tradition of the elders?' These very traditions make void the commands of God; but because they are their own, His commands are set aside for them.

"You have made void the commandment of God through your own tradition." What is obedience to the tradition of the elders, will be transgression of the commandments of God.

Once let in the principle of the maintenance of that which is our own, and it will be the maintenance of that which is opposed to that which is of God.

If the eye looks to the elders, the commands of God will not be seen. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light, but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. The principle of hypocrisy is in this; for while they appear to worship God, it is not so indeed, it is in vain; for men's commandments are taught. But the worship of God and the commandments of God must be found in company with each other. If the heart is with the tradition of the elders, it is with the mouth only He will be approached, and with the lips only He will be honored. The purpose of our hearts must be to maintain the glory of the Lord, not of the elders-" Them that honor me I will honor."

(Ver. 10.) We now see the compassion of the Lord toward the poor deluded ignorant multitude. The scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus to tempt Him: (ver. 1;) but He now turns to the multitude to teach them that the root of defilement lay within in an unclean heart. When God searches, He searches the heart, but when Satan deceives, he blinds by thoughts of evil in the outside, to which man looks, and then man, and not God, is trusted in.

(Ver. 12.) if we are in the way of the Lord, what comes from Him to us will not stumble us, but help us on our way, because it is His way, made plain and easy to us. in that which comes from Himself. us, the Pharisees were stumbled by the saying of our Lord, because they were not plants of His heavenly Father's planting: and so this will ever be. The Church and the world cannot at all go on together: the one will stumble the other. He who is the chief corner-stone, elect, precious, is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to them that stumble at the word; but a sure foundation to them that believe. Thus, while all the builders of the great Babel shall be put to confusion, he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded. The ways of the Lord come in at once to deny the ways of man; and he who tries to hold man's ways will find those of the Lord confounding him. "They

are of the therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The wise man of this world knows the things of this world. But "we have an unction from the Holy One and we know all things." The truth is "the truth that is after godliness;" and he Who walks after his own lusts is willingly ignorant.

(Ver. 10, 11.) The Lord pitied the poor ignorant multitude whom their teachers were blinding to the real power of sin, as occupied with thoughts of external contact, and not a root of evil within. But the seat of defilement is in a corrupt heart; and the evil of the heart was allowed, if the traditions of the elders were observed, and real defilement passed over unobserved and unremedied. Defilement comes from an evil spring known unto God, though men may see it not. But this was not the teaching of the Pharisees, nor their own experience; for all their works they did to be seen of men: and this teaching they could not stand.

(Ver. 12.) Accordingly the disciples come to Him and say, Master, "knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" The words of the Lord will not stumble those who are in His ways. But he who walks in a path that is not the Lord's, will get no help from him to proceed in that path. Christ stumbled the Pharisees. These Pharisees had not become as little children to enter into the kingdom of heaven. If they had, the words of Christ would build them up, and nourish their hearts before God, putting nothing away from them, but that which would hinder them in the kingdom. But Christ's words stumbled the Pharisees-and why? Because they were not plants of his heavenly Father's planting, and he could not cultivate them. They must be rooted up. Precious is it to be in that way which Christ's words will help us in; and woe be to the man who would stumble a little one who belongs to Him! A wise master builder in God's building would stumble a builder of Babel: but woe be to the Babel builder who stumbles God's laborers; and here the Church and world cannot go together. The voice from heaven said, "Come out of her, my people." The voices of the earth said, Stay in her. They are of the world, and they speak of the world, and the world heareth them; but the voice from heaven said, "Come out of her, my people," because the city of our God is the heavenly Jerusalem, composed of those first brought up to heaven, from earth, and then coming down out of heaven. The stone set at naught of the builders here, is there become the head of the corner. Coming to Him as a living stone, the lively stones are built up; and in this are the saints separated from the world: and here is their faith and their patience.

(Ver. 21.) Here we see the Lord in another scene. In the estimation of man, of much less value, but not so to Him who seeth not as man seeth. Many boast in their place and their people: God would make us ashamed of both; but value His grace which puts the shame away.

When the Apostle Paul was called out, the Lord led him into Arabia, (not to Jerusalem,) and amongst the heathen. (Gal. 1) Little of interest in either the place or the people: they were the worthless objects of the grace of God; but in this of all interest to Him and to those that are His, for His sake.

Men might boast in Jerusalem, in contrast with Tere and Sidon, and Speak well of scribes and Pharisees, as contrasted with a poor woman of Canaan, with her house under manifested judgment, because her daughter was possessed of a devil. But all this was the more occasion to draw out the sympathies of Jesus. She could not be worse than the chief of sinners, and such He

came to save. And if her daughter was possessed of a devil, for this cause was He, the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. But there was that in her which He could estimate-the understanding of her heart of the grace that was in -Him, that if her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil, this was a case for the mercy of the Son of David. Poor to her was " the washing of cups and pots;" little to her was " the washing of hands." Her trouble lay too deep. Nothing but the mercy of the Son of David could meet her case, because it was the grievous vexation of her daughter; possessed by a devil. This was very precious in the sight of the Lord. She had faith in Him; and that it was great faith He proves by trial; for nothing could lessen the power of it in her soul. She had herself no character to lose. Anything might be said to her, but it came not with surprise. This she knew before; but mercy was in the Son of David, and nothing could lower her soul's estimate of this. Jesus might be silent and not answer her a word; the disciples might say, " Send her away, for she crieth after us; nothing that could be said could check her. Help was in Him, and she wanted help. If she could not take the place of a child to get the children's bread, she was satisfied to be a dog to get the crumbs of that bread. But now her trial is over. " O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." How many does this poor woman of Canaan put to shame, because of their poor thoughts of the riches of Christ's grace.

What Is the Responsibility of the Saints?

It is an unhappy circumstance that many Christians have an idea that responsibility and grace are incompatible, (and by grace I mean full saving grace,) and if strongly impressed with the necessary truth of the one, they reject the other. This arises partly from the groundless supposition that responsibility and uncertainty, as to the result, necessarily go together; partly from a confusion between the responsibility of man, sinful man, and the saint's responsibility; and partly from the supposition that responsibility and power must necessarily go together. All these suppositions are founded on human reasonings, and are all alike groundless. When a Roman cut off his thumb, so that he could not hold a spear, his responsibility to the state to be a soldier had not ceased, although he had not the power to fulfill his responsibility. The responsibility flowed from another source, namely, his being a Roman subject or citizen. If I command my child to come, and it will not, alleged incapacity to come, if true, is not an excuse, if it willed not to come. Had the will been there, the incapacity might have been removed. Again, the elect angels are bound to do God's will, but there is no uncertainty. God sustains them in will and deed; they delight to do His will and there is no question at all about the result. Such a question cannot be raised. Their delight to do God's will is a part of their existence, in which they are sustained by infinite power, and thus they do it by the strength given to them. Even Christ Himself was responsible to do His Father's will when He had undertaken it; but there could be no question for a moment as to failure. His moral being was perfectness, was never anything else, nor could be. But every created being is responsible; that is he ought always to do God's will, not his own. It flows from the necessary and immutable relation of the creature to the Creator. The creature ought to be, in all its thoughts and ways, what suits the relationship in which it subsists. All relationships, as such, have duties, including in these thoughts and feelings which correspond to and express the relationship. Husband and wife, father and child, master and servant, brother and sister, by virtue of the relationship in which they are, ought to be what the word expresses, and all that is implied in it. The husband is bound to be a husband; that is, he is bound to be what the word means; and so the wife; and so on. The relationship is not the duty; but the duty is inseparable from the thought of it.

It will be found that this is not the idea that men have of their responsibility to God, and in part they are right; but that they are so is the consequence of the fall, and in practical result they are wholly wrong.

The idea men generally have of responsibility is, that they must live in a certain way to escape judgment, and to gain eternal life. Now, there is a fundamental truth in this, as in every testimony of conscience. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." They who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, will have indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. As a general principle, we have the knowledge of good and evil, (which in itself is a divine perfection, though we have acquired it through the fall,) and we know that God approves good and hates evil. So far as the fact of a natural conscience, thus judging, goes, Then are right. But they do not really believe, till taught of God, that we are in this state as fallen. Yet all their life betrays it. I do not merely mean

betrays the fact that they are sinners, but the thought that they must gain eternal life, find God's favor, and, as they hope, in the end come to God and be happy. They have not yet found Him then, nor know His thoughts concerning them. They are in no relationship with God, from which duties flow, save that in which they have already failed; but while they look at God as a Judge, they hope to win a place of safety in a happy relationship, by doing their best, and with God's help, and the like.

This may have a more or less religious coloring, but the general idea remains the same; that man has to win the happy relationship to God by his conduct; that he is responsible to please God in his conduct, and by this means inherit (really at bottom, merit, whatever make-weight they may throw in) eternal life and happiness. God's goodness, Christ's merits, religious duties and ceremonies, come in to help out the account, and make up for failures; but account it is, to be decided by the day of judgment, and uncertain till then. There is no present subsisting relationship with God. There is no real consciousness of being either saved or lost. Man, perhaps, is admitted to have been lost; but in some vague way Christianity, it is thought, has put an end to this, (without, after all, saving him,) at least provided men behave themselves properly. The result is, a man's responsibility is to maintain a conduct required in order to inherit eternal life, and a real, present relationship to God is unknown. It is to be acquired. Some, indeed, pretend by ceremonies to place you in a perfect relationship with God; but it is lost before it is found, or known, so that it has nothing moral in it, and the result is, man has to make it out, after all, by his own conduct.

Now, though there is an abstract principle of truth in the ground-work of this idea, the real truth of man's condition and christianity is wholly set aside by it.

God does love good and hate evil. There must be a life in true purpose of what is good, to be with Him in bliss; and natural conscience gives a true, if not an adequate sense of good and evil, and of its result. But these general principles say nothing of my actual state, be I in or out of Christ. They are true, but they say nothing of me, nor do they tell me what my responsibility is, nor what my actual relationship to God is, if I am in one. Responsibility there is. The maintenance of responsibility is the maintenance of the rights of God,-of his authority over us. Where it is objected to, there lies always at the bottom of the objection either the notion that man must have power of his own to be responsible, or that the result is uncertain, which is only another form of the same idea. But if God creates any being, He creates it in and for the position it is in, whatever be His ultimate purpose, and cannot mean it to abide in inconsistency with the position He has placed it in. It would be a kind of blasphemy against Him and deny judgment. No, the angels that kept not their first estate are reserved in chains of darkness. Man, who kept not his first estate, is passed under death, and excluded from paradise, awaiting also the judgment of God, except as delivered and saved in Christ. " So he drove out the man."

But then the notion man has of responsibility-that of conduct by which eternal life may be won-is a mere consequence of our fallen state, of our alienation from God. It is a laboring, working, to win what we have not, and to gain by our conduct a position in which we are not. Yet, though this is consequent on the fall, on our distance from God, that distance is not really known. What man is, as fallen, is not really acknowledged: for if such be our position, we are already lost. We need to be saved.

But responsibility to pursue a course of conduct by which we gain a position or a reward, is not the only character of responsibility: nay, it is an unnatural one-one which flows from disordered relationships. True, genuine responsibility is the walking according to a position in which we are, and which carries its obligations with it. The impossibility of losing the position does not alter the responsibility. It makes it perpetual. A child is always a child to its parent, be he a good child or a disobedient one. We must get the thought well fixed in our minds, that responsibility connected with labor for the yet uncertain attainment of a relationship in which we are not yet, is an extraordinary, and, so to speak, an unnatural kind of responsibility.

When we come to the real fact of what a creature is, we shall find that uncertainty does not characterize responsibility so much as we suppose. If not sustained of God by divine strength, we shall fail: if sustained, we shall not. Our sense of this dependence is our daily safety. Without me ye can do nothing." The angels that fell, and Adam, are witnesses of the path of a creature left to his responsibility, untempted or tempted. The elect angels and renewed men are examples of beings sustained of God in responsibility. But man is not of this mind. He is, he says, in a state of probation: he thinks that, though fallen, he may (doubtless, he will say, with God's help) make out the leading a life which will adequately satisfy his responsibility. Many, of course, will add the goodness of God (as they will feel their path imperfect) and the merits of Christ, to make up what fails.

It is not my purpose to dwell on this point; but the truth is, what is here called goodness is merely a hope that God will think as lightly of our sins as we do, and as we, for safety's sake, should like Him to do, which is a sure proof of not being converted. As to the merits of Christ, they are not meant to make sin excusable, but righteousness perfect before God. His blood cleanses from sin, because God will have none before Him. He is our righteousness, and it is a divine and perfect one: but he is not to make up ours, so that our failures are forgotten.

But, for man, out of God's presence, with the thought of having to do with God, this question must arise-how to have his favor, how to have life. And God has met it. Man is responsible to live before God according to the position he is in as man. He has got wholly out of this. Morally he is a sinner. But the character of the responsibility depends on the relationship between man and God, and man and man. He has to act according to the relationship in which he is as man toward each. That is abstractedly what he ought to be. He pretends to be or to will it, and takes his position on this ground to seek God's favor and life. God takes him up on this ground. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. Or, if man will, He presents to him the duties even of the second table, as it is called-this do, and thou shalt live. This is written in the law, and sanctioned by the Lord as the answer to the question, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Let man, away from God, do that, and he shall live.

Promises had been given unconditionally, which center all in Christ, the seed of the woman, and of Abraham, and of David. Here no question of righteousness was raised: none of responsibility. It was the free gift of God, His promise. If we dare to say so, He was responsible alone; His accomplishment of the promise therefore sure. But, with a creature knowing good and evil, and with a God who judges it, the question of righteousness must come. God could not be indifferent to evil. The question of responsibility and righteousness was raised in the law. There the promises were taken on condition of obedience, and, " this do and live," became the rule for man.

Responsibility took partially the character of a position to be acquired by conduct, not the fulfillment of the duties of a position in which man already was. I speak, of course, as between him and God. In that conduct relative duties are contained, but the accomplishment of them was to be the means of possessing life. The real result was the discovery that the righteousness was not to be had, that the condition which had made it necessary, made it impossible. Man was a sinner away from God. Therefore he had to seek life; but therefore he had not the righteousness needed to acquire it. As the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, the disease of which he had to be cured disabled him from doing that by which he was to acquire health.

The law was given, as Scripture expressly declares, that this state of things might be made plain to the conscience of man. It entered that the offense might abound. By it was the knowledge of sin. Sin, by it, became exceeding sinful; and it proved not only that sin was there, but a harder lesson, namely, that we were slaves to it - "without strength" - that the law was weak through the flesh, and that flesh could not be subject to it. As many as were of the works of the law were under the curse. The responsibility was undertaken, not fulfilled; and what was ordained for life was found to be for death. This is not all that man has done, but I confine myself to my subject, namely, what was done as to inheriting eternal life, by meeting our responsibility as men. IT IS CLOSED. We have lost our created position in innocence - we cannot gain another by our conduct. We are, as men, lost! The responsibility was there in paradise, and man failed. He places himself under it when really already ruined, under the law, and makes his ruin evident. Such is the only result, as to Our relationship with God, of our being on the ground of responsibility as men. What is needed for us is the distinct discovery of it. We are under sin, death, and condemnation already, looked at as in ourselves.

But God's salvation is another thing. That is not our responsibility. Christ comes into the state, in grace and love, in which we were by sin; Himself sinless, and the object of divine favor in doing it; but He came and died and drank the cup of wrath. He has closed for all who believe on Him, and in the Father's love in Him, the whole question relative to the first Adam and our sinful life. We own that we were enmity against God, condemned, guilty; this He has taken upon Himself as bearing it before God; that is, the whole consequence of our responsibility as men, and IT IS CLOSED. He has died as bearing it; He has died to sin once, and he that is dead is freed from sin. Thus, in our representative, all whose work is available to us, the whole question of our responsibility as men has closed in judgment and death for me, as I had discovered it had as to myself: the life has passed away in which I lived and was responsible to God. I exist no more, as living, as a child of the first Adam. "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world?" says Paul. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I," &c. "Reckon yourselves therefore to be dead indeed unto sin." Christ has perfectly glorified God's righteousness in respect of all the evil; but all has passed away in His death judicially as to which God had to be glorified. The nature, being, sins, guilt, existence in which he was responsible and subsisted before Him, are, as regards the believer, gone before God. "When we were in the flesh," says Paul, "the motions of sin which were by the law."

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwell in you." The whole question of our responsibility, as living in the life of Man before God, is settled by Christ's judicially bearing the consequences before God, and by the death of the life in which we stood as sinners. But then

Christ is now a new life. He is risen, and we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I live, but not I, but Christ lives in me. I am quickened together with Christ, and raised up together. God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses. They are buried in His grace, and I am alive anew and without them.

But more than this. There is a divine righteousness in which Christ stands before God,' as risen: that is, in which I stand in the power of a new life as risen with Him. I am made the righteousness of God in Him. As He is, so am I in this world. This is in the reality of a life in which we live, which is Christ; and of a divine righteousness in which we stand before God, which is Christ. Not I, but Christ lives in me. It is a real, living, certain position before God, in which I, through grace, and Christ are one, though all flows from, and, thank God, is dependent on Him. God has given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son. He that bath the Son hath life, and he that bath not the Son hath not life: but then it is perfect righteousness already before God.

More than this, I am a child, a son. Such is my relationship with God. I have eternal life. I am in a known, blessed, fixed relationship with God, where grace has placed me through the working of the same power in which Christ was raised from the dead, and set at God's right hand. I am not only in it, but it is my relationship with God, and there is none but that. The old one is passed; the new one, founded on divine righteousness, flows from my being really born of. God, made partaker of the divine nature. I cannot be in any other. It is my being, my existence, before God; the life and relationship in which He has placed me, and in which I live from Him. The old one is gone in Christ's grave.

What is now my responsibility? To make all efforts to obtain eternal life by my conduct? I have it. To make out righteousness? I am -LE e righteousness of God in Christ: He is my righteousness. To seek to win God's favor? He has loved me so as to give His Son for me, and accepted me in the beloved. To win a position with God? He has made me His child and son. " Now are we the sons of God." What can I seek other, or more, than to say, " as He is, so am I in this world?" Here my soul is at peace-a precious thing! At peace with my God and Father, in known relationship with Him. Christ is gone to His Father and my Father, His God and my God. Blessed thought! What a place of peace and love, according to the very nature of God, and the revelation of Him by the Son, it sets me in!

Here, then, I enter into the true kind of responsibility, in contrast with the hopeless and sin-convincing one into which I got by the fall; a responsibility which was really according to a lost position, that I might find out my ruin and condemnation. My responsibility now is a responsibility flowing from the position in which I am; which belongs in peace to it; not one by which it is to be attained: a responsibility such as all our responsibilities are according to God that of walking according to the position in which I am already. He that says he abides in Christ, ought to walk as He walked. A child of God, and such forever, ought to walk as a child of God, " as dear children." My responsibility is that of a Christian. I am to walk as one, because I am one; not that I may be one. The fact that I am a child forever, is not a reason for not walking like one. It is only the baseness of a morally ruined being, that he could suppose that he was not to be consistent with the relationship he was in, because it was an unchangeable one. As we are in our Christian position in virtue of a new life, such a thought cannot at bottom be that of a Christian. This is the reasoning of the apostle in 'Rom. 6-not that I ought not, but that cannot, if dead, live to what I am

dead to.

My responsibility, then, is not as a man in the first Adam, but as a Christian in the second. On the first ground I am wholly lost already: it is vain to talk of responsibility, unless to convince of sin. On the second, because I am saved, and a child of God in the family, I am become responsible for walking as such, like the example of the firstborn among many brethren. It is not connected with the possibility of losing my position more than of my gaining one. It flows from the position I am in. I am to walk like a child of God since I am one. It is a responsibility of peace and joy; what James calls "the perfect law of liberty," because my new nature finds its delight in what God wills and commands, and in obeying Him. It finds its delight in Him, but therefore in obeying Him, and also in what He wills. The nature I have received is that divine nature which expresses itself in the commands given to me; only there is also authority in them. But the commands are morally the expression of the nature which I have, and which delights in them, and finds the comfort of perfect light and guidance in them. And here is the immense and total difference of the commands of the law and Christ's commands. The law says "do this and live." Christ's commands are the expression of the life which he had, and the guide of that which I have. The life was the light of men. The perfect expression of the will and nature of God in man, which His words and commands expressed; and now we can say, "Which thing is true in Him and in you," because He is our life in the power of the Holy Ghost. Christ was the real expression of divine life in man; that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us. Hence it was the light of men. It was in the place, condition, and state of men, and hence obedient, also dependent. Thus was it brought out in His

temptation. This life is ours, since His exaltation on high, when He had presented a perfect righteousness to the Father. In that I have a perfect peace and perfect favor, and now the only thing I have to do is to glorify "that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body." I can say, "I abide in Him"-placed

with the Father in His perfectness before Him-a place of joy and peace, and witness of eternal love. I ought then so to walk as He walked. Christian responsibility is the responsibility of being a Christian; that is, of walking because we are in Christ, as Christ walked, through Christ dwelling in us. Our place before God is Christ-our part to exhibit Christ before men. This, while the flesh is still in us, and the world around us, needs the daily cross. "Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body." Our responsibility is not to attain unto life, but to manifest it, in spite of hindrance; yea, through hindrances, and in the midst- of the world. Two things have to be noticed here. First, the manifestation of the divine life, in which, through the Holy Ghost, we are united to Christ, has to be carried on in the midst of temptation, and in spite of the existence of the old nature, the flesh, in us, by which all that is in the world can become a temptation to us. Communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of the divine life, can only have place so far as the flesh is practically held-as we have the title to hold it-for dead. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body. Here is the daily exercise of the life we have got, in which we learn what we are practically; and the faithfulness, graciousness, and tenderness of God is experienced, and to be felt by us. In which we have our senses exercised to discern good and evil, the contrast between God and the flesh is deeply learned, what is mere nature discerned through what is spiritual, while the effect of all is,

that one is emptied of self, and Christ acquires, in a certain sense, an exclusive place, and becomes all in all. The soul is satisfied with Him, and hence in lowliness and singleness of eye can discern what is flesh, and either avoid it, or content itself without the false support its efforts or objects give to the natural heart, which leans on them.

Two means are employed of God to carry the redeemed through the desert, the word of God, and priestly intercession. They may be found in Heb. 4:11-15. The word is the weapon of God to discern between that which is of the Spirit, and everything in which the will of the flesh works. All that is mere nature, which is ever a snare, and positive sin where the will is at work, gets often so closely allied to what God Himself has created and owned, that the close application of the word in the power of the Spirit is needed to distinguish. Yet morally they are most different and opposed, because God is not in the one, but human will, and is in the other, as affections, for example, which become idolatrous (though legitimate and in themselves right) or passions. In these, and in all cases, the word, sharper than any two-edged sword, that true sword of the Spirit, the truth, the bringing home of the living word, who has sanctified Himself for us, is the means by which God first of all judges in us all that would tend to make us fall in the desert. Then for all weakness, and even failure, comes the priesthood; for it is to the course of this exercise, in which above all our entire dependence on God is brought to light, and the heart is practically purified, that the priesthood of Christ also applies. It is not exercised to obtain justice for us, nor to bring us to God. It is founded on perfect righteousness, and the propitiation made for our sins, and exercised to maintain or restore the communion of the saint, while walking in weakness, with the perfect light into which he is brought, through the rent veil, by that righteousness and propitiation. Nor do we go to Christ in repentance, that He may intercede for us: that would be distrust of the perfect love of the Father, into whose presence He has brought us as children, nor would any one do so really; but He intercedes for us that we may repent. Our souls are thus restored through grace to communion, or maintained in it. Intercession is for the saints. For will, the word is used; for weakness and for failure, the grace of priesthood.

The other point to which I allude is, our encouragement in the course we have to run. This is afforded us in promises and rewards, to which is annexed the careful and faithful government of the Father, who chastens where needed. God is sovereign in the revelation of His goodness to the heart, and, knows when to grant it; but He has revealed principles of government, " If a man love me, he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." " If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." It is evident that God cannot have communion even with an idle thought. Christ does not say, as to salvation, " If a man love me, God will love him." We love Him because He first loved us. The very characteristic of God's love is, that He loved us when we were sinners. But though God can visit and restore in grace, His communion is in holiness, and with the obedient; while we are dependent on His grace for both.

Here comes, too, the scripture doctrine of rewards. As regards righteousness and salvation, reward can have no possible place. These privileges are in Christ, and perfect. They are the reward, so to speak, of His labors and work. So, if one takes reward as the motive for work, he is wholly on false ground. Love and obedience are the only true motives, as they were in Christ Himself. That the world may know," He says, " that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." And, again, " My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish

his work." But rewards are presented as encouragements in the difficulties which are on the road into which love and obedience bring us. Thus it could be said of Christ, " Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." So Moses, by the Holy Ghost, is approved, saying, " He had respect to the recompense of the reward." And of all, " Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor." The Thessalonians are a crown, a glory, to Paul, as they are not to us. Yet the word keeps steadily before us, that it is of grace, and that, in rewarding His laborers, God does what He will with His own; but in overabounding grace, to sit on Christ's right hand and on His left is given to them for whom it is prepared of His Father. But as to righteousness and salvation, all are alike. We shall be conformed to the image of God's Son. But, though sovereign as to the place God gives us, in connection with the Holy Ghost's work in and by us, (for it is in connection with this that reward is: it has nothing to do with our righteousness, which is Christ Himself,) this sovereignty is exercised in giving the reward according to the labor in gift and calling; so that God's government and the saint's responsibility may be displayed; yet so as that the saint is brought more clearly to say, " Not I, but the grace of God which was in me." It is exactly he who has the deepest sense of his responsibility, who will the most deeply feel his entire dependence upon grace. If these questions are mixed up with that of salvation, all is legal and false; but when clear on this, the exercise of the heart in them is most useful, as leading to the sense of dependence, confidence in Him who is able to bless, and delight; to do it; the sense that there is a living God, that we can do nothing of ourselves, nothing without Christ. It bumbles and leads to daily confiding dependence upon God.

The principle I have alluded to above, will be found to be universal, namely, that reward is, in scripture, never the motive of action, always the encouragement of him who is active from other motives. Thus, we well know, it was love, eternal, divine love, and thence obedience to His Father, which led Christ in the path of sorrow. In that path, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured. Moses visited his brethren because God put it into his heart to prefer suffering with the people of God, to a life of ungodly ease in a court. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible, for he had respect to the recompense of the reward. " In due time we shall reap," says the apostle, "if we faint not." The love of Christ constrained him too, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; but he knew that a crown of righteousness was laid up for him, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give to him in that day. Where reward is the motive, all is wrong; but the gracious Lord encourages us in our labor with His approbation, and His promise of reward at the end. We believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.

Thus our relationship with God is founded on a perfect and divine righteousness, so that it is divine, and His perfect love enjoyed in a known relationship, and in a divine way. Hence holy affections are free, and God is glorified. All is from Him, and according to Him. No question of righteousness can be raised outside Christ. Blessed be God, such a relationship is ineffably sweet, and sure as divine perfection can make it. At the same time the active, moral energies of a life which pursues its object under the hand of God are maintained. One thing I do, says the apostle: I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God. " If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." The whole epistle to the Philippians goes on this ground, and hence speaks of attaining, working out salvation, turning to salvation, and the like. The moral development which is connected with personal responsibility, under grace takes place,

and under the eye of a gracious and holy Father and holy God. We are set in the path in which Christ walked, to follow His steps. Sweet to be allowed to do it, and that His servant, walking in this path, shall be where his master is. The word, " Well done, good and faithful servant," sounds sweet in the ears, and most so in his who knows that by His grace alone can we be one or the other. If we were not His, we could not serve; His, by a new life; His, by the purchase of His blood; and in the service, all hangs upon His daily grace; and the place he has given to us, and the special glory in which each faithful servant will be set, is part of the purpose and operation of God. But all our responsible, moral exercises, once we are free, are connected with it. The lively energies of hope, the watchfulness and keeping under of the body,- we fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life.

What has secured us, as salvation, has set before us, as this salvation, a hope of glory which sets in play the whole energy of the new man through the Holy Ghost. Paul saw Christ glorified. There was an end of legal righteousness, and the certainty of divine. There was the glory to be attained. All was dross and dung that he might win Christ; and if it cost him his life, good, on the road to a resurrection from among the dead. It was not a responsibility in which he labored alone, so to speak, as obliged under law to fulfill his tasks or fail. It was closely allied with the attachment of his heart to Christ,-that he might win Christ. Christ had laid hold of him for it; but he longed to lay hold therefore of the blessed prize.

This is carried on as under the moral government of God. The flesh cannot serve Christ,-it can only hinder. To be vessels made to honor, we must be clean. Hence the apostle kept his body under. Hence Peter tells us, "If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judges every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." The Father judges no man as regards final, definitive judgment; as the apostle says, " the time of your sojourning here in fear." Is it fear of not having part in redemption? On the contrary, it is founded on the solemn greatness and excellency of it, the moral depth of God's judgment of good and evil. " Forasmuch," he continues, "as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, but with the precious blood of Christ." Thus the bright energies of hope, the joy of communion, the sweetness of dependence, the holy watchfulness of fear, as engaged in this great conflict with evil and on God's side, all unite to bring out through known grace, and as founded in grace, every moral development of which a human being, as quickened of God, is capable, so as to connect him with the perfection of God, in communion with whom it is all wrought; and to make him like Christ, who is the perfect model of it, as His communion with His Father was perfect:-to grow up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

For the need in which this service and path sets us inwardly and outwardly, the path in which Christ walked, sets us in communion with God, in all that is in Him, to meet it in grace to our souls. It is not only help for the circumstances, but what God is for the soul, in all that is discovered in it by its passing through the circumstances. The wilderness makes the heart of man known; but it makes God known to the heart too. The full joy of it will be hereafter. In the type, as in the reality, it was founded on a perfect redemption; and as Israel at the Red Sea chanted the salvation which had brought them to God, so, at the close, Balaam must testify, that no divination was of any avail. God had not seen perverseness in Israel, nor iniquity in Jacob. He would treat him for his faults in wisdom Himself, as His; but no accusations were of avail. It is beautiful to see God thus answering for Israel on high, while poor foolish Israel was ignorantly murmuring and disobeying below.

Finally, grace is such, that, what God gives as the ground of destruction in judgment, " I will consume, for it is a stiff-necked people," once grace is known, Moses can give as a reason for God's going with them. " If I have found grace in thy sight, let my Lord go with us, for it is a stiff-necked people."

The Widow of Tekoah

2 Samuel 14

In the gospel it is not that God lets mercy rejoice against judgment, according to the law of liberty, which is the highest moral rule prescribed to us, (James 2:12,13,) but He secures the honor of judgment, while giving place to the full exercise or gratification of mercy. He is just, though a justifier.

This is the wonder. To do this is God's own exclusive glory. (Isa. 45:21, " a just God and a Savior, there is none beside me,") for none but God could do this. No sacrifice, no victim for the altar, other than Himself would be sufficient for this end, that God should be just, while a justifier. The Epistle to the Hebrews establishes this, the Romans announces it.

It is, therefore, on something more excellent than the law of liberty that the Lord acts in the gospel. That may be the highest rule for the moral actings of man; but God acts after a manner quite beyond and above it. He does not allow mercy to glory or triumph over judgment, but causes them both to rejoice together; righteousness and peace to kiss each other. Glory to Himself in the highest is declared, as well as peace on earth to man. This was prefigured of old, and realized in the cross.

There was a ram caught by the horns for a sacrifice, when Isaac was freed. There was blood upon the lintel when Israel was freed. There was an altar to be set up in Oman's threshing-floor when Jerusalem was freed.

And so at the cross. The victim had been offered, and then the vail was rent, and then the graves were opened-that is, the sacrifice was accomplished on the altar-it was then accepted of God in heaven-and then it went forth to free the captives of sin and death. Just according to the type of Lev. 16 The blood was shed, then put upon the mercy-seat, for acceptance, and then upon everything else for reconciliation.

All this tells us not of mercy rejoicing against judgment, but of mercy and judgment rejoicing together-judgment rejoices in the victim or altar; mercy in the reconciliation or atonement.

In the case of Ornan's threshing-floor, already alluded to, the sword of the angel was stayed, that David might have some hope and occasion for exercise of spirit. But the sword of the angel was not sheathed till the altar was raised. It was the altar that sheathed the sword, as it was the blood that rent the vail, and then broke up the graves.

Now this, as I said, is God's exclusive glory. " There is no god else beside me, a just God and a Savior, there is none beside me. (Isa. 45:21.) And therefore God Himself immediately upon this says, " Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Christ is this Savior-God.

Now David was man, and not God; and this glory of which we speak was just that which did not belong to David. He could not find out a way whereby to bring his banished home to him. If he

please, he may act on the law of liberty, forgiving his own private wrongs seventy times seven a day.

He may, in all such cases, let mercy rejoice against judgment. But this is the utmost he can do. He is unable to be just and yet a justifier. He cannot justify the wrong doer and be righteous himself. Seated on the throne, and yet Absalom's father, he is not equal to the task of maintaining the integrity of that throne, and at the same time of gratifying the heart of that father. He attempted it, but he failed. Absalom was never really brought home. His was not the return of the prodigal in Luke 15. He returned, but it was to be a plague and dishonor to David, and only to expose him a thousand times more than ever. His heart spoke in answer to the widow of Tekoah. His heart was gratified, but his throne was cast down. But God, through the sacrifice of the Son, is never more righteous than when justifying the believing sinner.

The Word Precious Above Everything, or an Offense

Note, how vital root is-secret life. If the word has given life, only the word can satisfy it. The rain which cometh oft upon it will be relished. And needed, too; for as there is no power of life in the heart, so there is no source of nourishment if life exists.

But if I have got divine life through the word, it will be everything to me. If I have found my joy in God's word, persecution or affliction, because of it, will make me cling to it the closer. Persecution, in such a case, would merely come to rob me of my treasure. But if the word has never separated me from myself, by the gift of a new eternal life in Christ, then if trouble comes for the word, I shall give it up to keep myself-my life.

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