

# GIRDLE OF TRUTH VOLUME 5

by W.H. Dorman

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*A collection of articles and writings by W.H. Dorman from Girdle of Truth Volume 5, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

51 Chapters

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## Girdle of Truth Volume 5

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## 1 John 5:10

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"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

There is an impression of intense personality, of individualizing each of us, in John's writings, which cannot fail to strike us, whether we read his Gospel or his Epistles.

The Gospel opens with this. It tells us that the world did not know Him who made it, that Israel did not receive Him to whom they belonged; but that "as many" as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.

Here is personality at once. This "as many" bespeaks it.

When we read the Epistles we find the same. Each of us, as it were, feels himself addressed.

It is the fellowship of the individual saint that is contemplated at once, as in the first chapter of the first epistle. There are orders or ages among these individuals, these elect ones, as fathers, young men, and little children; but each order has personal knowledge of God, and each one of them his own individual standing with God. The fathers "know him that is from the beginning," the young men have "the word abiding in them," the little children "know the Father." There is an anointing in them. (1 John 2)

So again, each of them has the seed of God in them. (Chapter 3)

So again, each of them has God dwelling in him, by the Spirit that He has given him; (3:24;) and the virtue or quality of that given Spirit is declared in this, that he who has Him makes a true confession to Jesus; and though they be but little children, yet do they, by virtue of His indwelling Spirit, overcome the lie that is in the world. (Chapter 4:1-4.)

And so again, each of these knows for himself the great fact that God dwells in him and he in God, through this Spirit given to him, and that given Spirit also enables him to make a confession to the grace of the Father in sending the Son, and also to the personal glory of Jesus, that He is "the Son of God." (Chapter 4:13-15.)

It is "whosoever," again, and again, and again, in this Epistle, and such language intimates individuality, just like the "as many" of John 1:12 already mentioned.

Each has been given an understanding to know Him that is true, as we read at the close. (Chapter 5:20.)

It is in company with all this that, as I judge, the apostle says in chap. 5:10, "he that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself." It is in character with the whole Epistle.

According to John, the individual saint is divinely independent. He is not left dependent on whatever religion his country, or his birth, or his education may have provided for him. He himself

has been personally, individually visited of God. He himself has received the Spirit, and therewith the divine seed, and light, and life, and truth, and unction-he has the witness in him, and needs not that any man should tell him what he is or whose he is. He knows this of himself. " He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

## Advice

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Be wise; place heaven before thine eye-

A glory and a certainty:

And write the word "HEAVEN" in thy heart,

In letters that will not depart;

That heaven may, as a living power,

Both save and govern thee each hour.

The days are dark and tempest-stirr'd:

To-morrow's greatly to be feared.

Without a certain object fixed,

One with the world unintermixed,

What is 't will keep thee in thy course,

And ease the weight of every cross?

Make heaven your object night and day;

'Twill never change or pass away.

A light 'twill be in densest gloom:

'Twill save thee from the coming doom:

And when the end of all draws nigh,

For thee it will uncloseth on high.

## The Basket of First-Fruits

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Deuteronomy 26:1-11

In this offering of the basket of first-fruits the individual Israelite is presented in the special aspect of a worshipper before the Lord, whose goodness had redeemed His people out of Egypt and planted them in the land of Canaan. It is a constitution which the Israelite was to observe when he had come unto the land which the Lord his God had given him for a possession; and where, in the full enjoyment of the blessing, he could, in act and confession, bear witness to the delivering mercy and faithfulness of the God before whom he was to stand and worship.

He is here the joyful witness of this goodness, and in the full effect of the faithfulness of Jehovah in the accomplishment of all His promises; promises, it may be observed, which, with regard to Israel, related to their establishment by the Lord, in Canaan, as their earthly inheritance.

The basket of first-fruits is a special constitution amidst the ordinances of Israel. Its character and import are distinct. The feasts of the Lord, which presented Israel in their nationality, unfolded, in type, at least, the means of redemption and the grounds of that relationship into which the people were thus brought to Jehovah; while the offerings and priesthood presented the grounds of approach to a God of holiness, in consonance with the character He bears. But it is not redemption that the basket of first-fruits presents; it is inheritance. And the worship connected with it is individual, and not corporate. The worshipper stands here in the full and unequivocal enjoyment of all that the faithfulness of God had promised; and the offering which he brings, the confession he makes, and the joy of heart by which it is accompanied, all bear the special impress of accomplished blessing. It is an offering of thanksgiving—a sacrifice of praise.

Misery and helplessness are owned, and mercy and redemption are acknowledged; but these are only steps in the pathway to the possession of the inheritance of the Lord. They were necessary steps, indeed; but they were only steps by which the faithfulness of Jehovah had brought His people to the inheritance of the "land that flowed with milk and honey."

The worshipper is here in possession of that inheritance; and he comes with his basket to the place where Jehovah had set His name. "Thou shalt go (says the ordinance) unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there." "And thou shalt set it (the basket) before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God."

What elements of worship are here brought together! How simple and yet how perfect! It is only, in truth, the appropriate owning of God in the actings of His goodness, in the results of which the worshipper has been placed. He comes not as an alien in the land, but as its possessor, planted in it by the Lord, whose gift it was. His own hand had gathered these first-fruits—the proof of the fruitfulness of His inheritance—and had stored them in the basket to present them as a witness before the Lord. They are the first-fruits of the land which the Lord His God had given him, and which he possessed and dwelt in. They are brought to the place which God has chosen to place His name there: to the appointed meeting place of the worshipper and the Lord, as He had said, "

In all places where I record My name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." The priest, too, the necessary medium of approach, is there, and has his appropriate part. " The priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God," the place where atonement has been made. Thus, then, we have the inheritance, the worshipper, the offering, the priest, the altar, and the assured presence of God. Now comes the confession. " Thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression: and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey."

The helplessness and miserable condition of the people whom God had redeemed is fully owned. Egypt is recalled to view as the place of their bondage, with the pity of the Lord in answer to their cry of anguish and oppression. Redemption is acknowledged in all its characteristic power as the work of the Lord. And, lastly, the land, as the inheritance which the Lord had given to His people, is characterized according to the terms in which it was described, when it was yet but the land of promise, " a land that floweth with milk and honey."

At this point, there is a touching and instructive change of address. It is no longer the blessed rehearsal of the acts of the Lord; but the worshipper speaks directly to the Lord. And how simply But this is always so, when the consciousness of His presence possesses the heart. " And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me!"

Then comes the final element of joy, which is the appropriate expression and fruit of the heart, arising from the conscious enjoyment of all that God had thus accomplished for him, and had given him to possess, and of the relationship in which God stood toward him. For there is the constantly-recurring expression, " the Lord THY God." And here " the Levite and the stranger" are brought in, as those who had a claim to participate in the joy which was flowing from the source of the grace and goodness of the Lord.

If this offering be looked at simply, it is the presentation of the first-fruits of his land by the Israelite to the Lord. God is first acknowledged and enjoyed in the blessings and in the inheritance His goodness has bestowed. It is not the blessing apart from God, but God owned and enjoyed in the blessing. So all the blessings of God's hand should bring us to God Himself; and should bring us to God first, with the first-fruits of thanksgiving to Him. Otherwise, His blessing may lead the heart away from Himself, and God may be forgotten in the very enjoyment which His goodness has bestowed.

This is true, not of temporal blessings only, but it is often true of the blessings of redemption and grace also. How many hearts are dwelling more on their security in Christ than on Christ Himself—resting in the effect of redemption as relating to their own happiness and hopes, instead of being brought by it into the eternal blessedness of communion with God. And how many, who have gone a step further, rest, practically, in the knowledge of their position in Christ, instead of using it to enjoy and to know God, the source of all their blessing, and to whom in thanksgiving and

praise it should all return. " Jesus suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The first-fruits of the inheritance which God has given us in Christ should be brought in the fullness of our hearts to God. In the enjoyment of every blessing, God should be the first in our thoughts. It is by His actings in grace that He makes Himself known to His people; and hence the character of the Giver, and the affections of His heart, become the prime element in their blessing. " God is love;" and love, to be known, must be enjoyed. And here it is infinite enjoyment.

God makes Himself known to His people by His own actings; and by these alone is He adequately revealed, whether in regard to the redemption of an earthly people, or in that redemption and grace and eternal inheritance which are the fruit of this love, through the death and resurrection and ascension and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God acting in the supremacy of His love; and thus making His very nature to be known by our hearts. And these actings of our God are the only suited moldings of His people's thoughts, and are designed to inspire and guide the worship they present. But how far, how very far, from this, is the mere wordy recapitulation of known truths before the Lord; in which memory, and not the heart, too often, takes the lead.

The basket of first-fruits, on the part of the Israelite, was the real witness, in the presence of God, of the portion which He had given His people; however suited might be the character of the confession by which the offering was accompanied. Alas I if we have nothing in our hearts, gathered, by faith, from our inheritance in Christ--if we have nothing when we come, as worshippers, before the Lord, but the confession of our lost estate, however true; or the acknowledgment of redemption, however certain--if there be no joyous affections kindled in our hearts by their having " tasted that the Lord is gracious;"--fruits of His love stored up in our souls, to be presented in praises and thanksgiving -we are like the Israelite coming without his basket, or with his basket empty--an insult instead of an honor to the Lord. The basket of first-fruits must be brought; for it is written, " Thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God." If he had not been dwelling in the inheritance, he could

not have brought of its fruits. " Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." May we dwell where we are thus stablished by God, and gather constant fruit from our inheritance, so that we may say, " And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me."

## The Believer's Portion in Christ

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It is important, in order to understand, by God's blessing, the truth presented in this epistle to notice two things: first, The point of time, in the revelation of God's thoughts and counsels, in which it comes in; and, secondly, The special subject which it is the purpose of the epistle to unfold.

As to the first, Scripture speaks of "a due time" in which " Christ died for the ungodly;" and it is necessary, if we would learn the force and application of the truths of God revealed in this portion of Scripture, especially to notice the " due time" of this epistle.

It is of far greater importance than is generally imagined, in order to understand fully almost any part of the divine word, to notice the order of God's dispensations; and to have before the mind a general idea, at least, of the subjects with which God's word is occupied.

In the study of the Scriptures, it has been almost forgotten by Christians, that the word of God is a whole; and that, as a whole, there is a connection, more or less intimate, between every part. And the order in which divine truth has been revealed renders it very necessary to consider, when Scripture is quoted or referred to, whether it is from the Old or New Testament; and also what particular subject is being presented. For it will be seen at once, as an example, that God could not speak about " the forgiveness of sins" to Adam in innocence, because sin had not yet entered into the world; though to us poor sinners it is the most precious and significant of God's gracious communications, and lies at the very threshold of our entrance upon the knowledge of all God's character and ways.

Again, He could not have spoken to Noah about, no more destroying the earth by the waters of a flood, until after Noah had witnessed that visitation of divine justice upon the old world. Afterward, indeed, to him and to us the bow of promise had its assuring voice, and told, and still tells, of a God who, in the midst of " judgment, remembers mercy."

But much less could God speak to us, as in this epistle, of being " quickened together with Christ, and raised up together with him," &c., before Christ had appeared in the world; or before He had been rejected as their Messiah by Israel. For the death of Christ was, for the part of Israel, the rejection and forfeiture of all the distinctive promises of God, to them as a nation, in their rejection of Him in whom all these promises centered, and in whom they were all to be fulfilled. But in the counsels of God, which rise above all man's sin and the creature's failure, the rejection of Christ by the nation to whom he had been promised, gave occasion for the bringing out of the hidden purpose of God, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." But this could not be until Israel had been proved by the coming of their Messiah, who was the hope of the nation, and in whom all the promises made to the fathers were to be verified. His rejection in this character, opened the door for higher blessings to those who believed, both of Jews and Gentiles, but the nation thus lost their claim to the promises, and in a future day will be brought in on the ground of undeserved mercy.

This may illustrate what is meant by " the due time" of this epistle.

But the second point is also important to be observed; which is the special subject it is the purpose of the epistle to unfold.

It is very natural for persons when they are not in the enjoyment of the peace of the Gospel, to have their minds more occupied with the means by which God brings sinners to Himself than with the fruits and displays of that grace which flow from a God of goodness, through' the accomplished work of His only begotten Son. But this epistle is n occupied with the means of a sinner's reconciliation to God. It rather presents us with the fruits and blessings of God's wondrous grace, when the stage has been (so to speak) cleared for their display; and when every barrier to their full, wide, and eternal flow has been, through the accomplished work of Christ, removed. It is not, however, designed to disparage or treat lightly this subject of the means by which a sinner is brought nigh to God, much less to discourage the heart that is seeking for this knowledge. In the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians this subject is treated fully and divinely; and would that all God's children were established in this truth of personal acceptance and justification through faith in Christ crucified and risen from the dead; that they might, so assured, go on to the understanding and enjoyment of that grace of God which, as it flows so freely from Himself, is made the portion of every believer in Christ.

God has shown to us the full counsels of His own grace in Christ, and He would have our hearts established in that grace. He has presented to us the excellency of the person of Christ, and the place which He now occupies in his presence; and connected with this He presents the place to which His grace has brought the Church, or believers, as the fruit of Christ's work-" the travail of his soul," and blessed issue of His victory over sin and Satan and death.

In the address of the epistle, " to the saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus," we have a designation of all believers; which shows that, whatever be the height of the blessings presented in it, or the depth of the grace it discloses, they are the portion which the God of goodness has given to all His children, however little their apprehensions may take up the blessings, or rise to the height of the goodness of Him by whom they are bestowed. It is important to notice this, because it is the portion of God's grace, and not that of my attainment, And the way to understand and to enjoy it is not through a clear intellect, but a simple heart. 'It is not activity of mind that God's revelations call for, but a quiet, unquestioning faith. " If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

Ordinarily, it is true, the state of the Church seems to call for instruction of a lower order than that of this epistle; that is to say, lower as to the character of the positive truths presented, as having more to do with the walk of believers, or with their individual encouragement, and the assuring of their faith; as also the raising of their motives, and teaching them what their walk should be in the world. Still ft is exceedingly needful, if the heart is to be formed for Christ, and if it is to enjoy its portion in Christ, and to honor the goodness of that God who has so opened the eternal springs of his love toward us, that we should be often dwelling, apart from anything else, near to this boundless ocean of love, which flows independently of all, but the good pleasure and grace of Him whom we know as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." For in this title we get our place and relationship, as the apostle speaks: " Grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" are the special titles of God in this epistle; and they are employed to make us know our relationship with God and our place before Him in Christ, as

well as His relationship with Christ. For His purpose from the first "predestinated us;" i.e., those who believe on His Son, " to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." And this is in accordance with the word of Christ, when He was risen from the dead: " I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God:" and also with that connection of the believer with Christ expressed in his declaration, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Christ liveth in me," says the apostle.

As to the Lord Jesus Christ, these titles mark the relationship in which God stood toward Him; as the humbled man on the one side, and His eternal relationship with the Father on the other. As He said on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and in the garden, " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

There is marked, then, in the first place, and with the chief prominence, the source whence all this goodness flows. For, surely, I may say, it is not so much the blessing as the blesser, that is here in prominence. Or if the blessing is dwelt upon, as it surely is, it is that the character and grace of the God who thus blesses may be known. The effect of a right understanding of the truths of this epistle is not that we should say, " What blessings has God bestowed upon us poor sinners! "-though that is true-but, " How blessed is that God of goodness-our God-who could counsel and frame and execute such counsels of grace, and unfold such surpassing depths of love and mercy!"

Thus then, and with this intent, the blessings are declared. " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus -Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Never can our hearts know the fullness and the power of this statement, unless we look at it from God's point, in heaven; and not our own, on earth. But how often does the mind fail of reaching the height and power of divine truth, in the word, through bringing down its blessed statements to the point of human admeasurement, or to the apprehension of what our need requires! How often do Christians, in their estimate of " all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places," turn to their past or present experience, and think of pardon, and peace, and restoring grace and communion with God and the comfort of the word, and the hope of heaven, and thus imagine they have reached the idea. But no. This is not the sum of " all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

We must be introduced to the place where Christ is, and think of his rewards of obedience, and of all that characterizes God's blessed presence in heaven, and of His infinite love to Christ-for " he has made us accepted in the beloved"-if we would estimate aright the portion He has made ours. It is not Israel's portion in which He has set His Church. I do not mean Israel's former portion, which was marred and forfeited by the people's disobedience; but their future portion, in the land, with all the blessings of earth and under Messiah's unfailing righteous rule. Even now we have our life, our portion, and our place with Christ. He is risen and ascended, and entered into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; and there, if you are Christ's, is your portion and nowhere else. There, and in no lower place. There, with no more limited range of blessing, and with no less a heavenly character.

And this portion is in accordance with God's eternal thoughts and counsels: it is " according as he hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world."

The time was now come for the disclosure of those thoughts of grace which had been revolving in the heart of God; through eternal ages, but which could not be disclosed until He who was the

center of them all had been manifested, and who by His worth, and obedience, and accomplished righteousness-by his relation to God and His association with us-became the eternal ground of their display.

But He who has designed this place for us, and has effected this relationship to Himself in us, also fits us, in His infinite grace, for the place in which He has set us in Christ. He has chosen us " IN HIM," " that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." That is, His counsels of grace have so wrought that we should be in His presence, in accordance with His own blessed character and nature. He is holy in His character, (as has been observed,) blameless in His ways, and His nature is love. And thus He will have His children before Him! For He has " predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself."

His ways of grace, how bright they shine; How deep His counsels, how divine.

But such grace as this excludes, of necessity, man's thought and man's desert. It is " according to the good pleasure of his will." There could be no other rule than this, for our blessed GOD to work by. Hence, when speaking in John of those to whom God gave authority, through receiving Christ, " to become the sons of God," it is added, " who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is God's good pleasure. It is the will of God. God wills according to His pleasure; and He accomplishes what He wills.

Now if God thus works " according to the good pleasure of His will," the issue of this grace, in which He has set us in Christ, is in perfect accordance with this counsel. Our relationship to God and our place before Him, of which Christ's work is the basis, and the infinite goodness of God the eternal spring, is declared " to be to the praise of the glory of his grace." It will issue in the illustration of that grace, making it shine out in glory.

How different are the results of man's desert and the issues of God's grace " The wages of sin is death; the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The measure of God's grace is according to the measure of the worth of Christ; for it is added, " wherein," or in which grace " he hath made us accepted," or graced us, (if the term might be used,) set us in the same grace, " in the beloved." It is Christ's place by title, and excellency, and reward; it is ours through Christ's work and God's eternal favor. Still, it is the place of God's children to be " made accepted in the beloved." But this is not to be limited by the thought that whatever measure of acceptance with God I have, I have it through Christ. This is so far true; but it is not the truth of this passage. The truth presented here relates to the character of the acceptance, more than to the grounds of it: and this is an important distinction. Important thus, because it sets me to inquire what is Christ's acceptance and place before God, in order to find the character of my own.

But, then, because it is the contemplated portion of persons that were sinners, and sin unfits for God's presence, it is said, (ver. 7) " In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." This takes up the point of God's grace lower down. There could never, it is assumed, be this portion for those who were still under sin, or with regard to whom the charge of sin had not been met. Hence the question of sin is introduced at this point, and is shown to have been met by the death of Christ; and the result to believers is, that in Him. they have " redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," and that " according to the riches of His (God's) grace." Redemption is here looked at as the door, the necessary door, of

introduction to the higher display of God's grace, in our association with Christ in His place and portion on high. Both are in display of " the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ."

This question having been thus met, the river and overflowings of divine grace are pursued still further. It is now to be shown that God has set his people in the place which most of all manifests assured favor, that is, the place of confidence. " Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

He here speaks of what goes beyond the believer's individual place and portion. For this " mystery of his will" which he has made known to us, reaches out to Christ's destined place, in manifested power and glory, as " head over all things;" the center and uniting link of heavenly and earthly power and glory. It is what God will do for Christ " in the dispensation of the fullness of times." The creation which' has been scattered and separated from God by sin and Adam's fall, is to be gathered again under one head in Christ. And this mystery, or secret of His will, is a new and special revelation on the part of God to His Church, as interested by her place and relationship to Christ, in all that concerns His glory. God treats us with confidence as His children; and, wonderful to think of, makes us the depositaries of the secrets of His will.

If this wide domain of heaven and earth be Christ's inheritance, who is " heir of all things," it is added, " In whom we have obtained an inheritance." It is not through whom; though that also might be true, as Peter speaks, " he hath begotten us again to an inheritance." But it is here Christ's inheritance, and the Church has her title to this only as a part of himself; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." The inheritance is Christ's, and we have our inheritance in Him. And we are predestinated to this, " according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." For God accomplishes by His power what He purposes in the sovereignty of His will. And being thus heirs with Christ it will be " to the praise of his glory." The relationship in which we are set to God, in Christ, is to " the praise of the glory of his grace;" but the inheritance that He gives us in Christ will be " to the praise of his glory;" because it is in the inheritance that the glory will be displayed. God gives grace and glory. The glory is but the result and fruit of grace. But the grace is deeper, because it looks at us in our sins and distance from God, and forgives and brings us nigh. Whereas the inheritance is the bestowment of God on those who are brought nigh to him, and whom His grace has brought nigh.

The expression (ver. 12) who " first trusted in Christ," refers to those believers from amongst the Jews who are presented as hoping or trusting in Christ before the nation receives him, which it will do in the latter day, after they have been chastened for their sins, and for their rejection of Christ.

But these trusted in Christ beforehand. It is not said that the Gentiles first trusted in Christ, or fore-trusted in Him; but only, " in whom ye also trusted, or hoped, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation:" and then it is added, which presents a wondrous truth, " in whom also ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

As Gentiles, in dispensation, they had been put in the same place and standing with those on the clay of Pentecost who were Jews, and who first received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was given independently to the Gentiles at the conversion of Cornelius, as may be seen in Acts 10 and 11. And here it is said, in Christ, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," as "the earnest of the inheritance." None but the Holy Ghost could be this, since He alone knows what the glory is, or can adequately bear witness to the glory of Christ's place on high. But this is essential, as the earnest of the inheritance.

The sealing with the Holy Spirit is God's part and act, as thus marking those whom He owns. But then it is a living seal. A seal, and, at the same time, an earnest, or foretaste, of the glory of that inheritance to which we are predestinated in Christ. The Church is under the guardianship of the Spirit, whose delight is to make known to the heirs the riches and glory of their inheritance in Christ.

Nothing can be more wonderful than these revelations of God, as they are presented in their unmixed character, and uninterfered with by man's low and narrow thoughts. "Blessed with all spiritual blessings"-chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world-holy and without blame before God in love-sonship with the Father-union with Christ, as set in Him-heirs with Him who is Heir of all-treated with confidence by God, and made the depositaries of the counsels of His love-and, to crown all, the Holy Ghost sent down to be the earnest of the inheritance of glory, until it is redeemed out of the hand of every enemy, to the praise of His glory.

O when shall the day dawn, and the shadows flee away? How should our souls be captivated by this love, and our course bear the stamp of this wondrous grace!

## Boldness

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### Hebrews 10:19

The present Gospel-day is called "the last days," in Heb. 1:2. And wondrously does that epistle unfold those characteristics of it which entitle it to be so called. It witnesses Christ to us after He has finished His work, filling the heaven of God on high, and all the visions and thoughts of faith here on earth. And does not this, I ask, entitle this Gospel-day, these days in which we have been living since the ascension of Jesus, to the honor of "the last days?" What can remain after such a condition of things as this, but glory and the kingdom? Adam's condition in the Garden of Eden could not have been called the last days; for all was then bearing witness of uncertainty in the relations of God and His creature. Man was tested. A command had been delivered, and all hung upon his obedience. Death and ruin might be the issue, or a keeping of the first estate.

So, during the age of Moses, or under the law. Man was again tested, and therefore that time could not have been called "the last days." The creature, in the person of Israel, was then again under probation, as Adam had been, and all was uncertainty. But now, in the stead of things being put to the proof, and the creature tested, and relationships between God and man 'made to rest on man's fidelity; things are now proclaimed as finished and perfected because of the sealed and accepted fidelity of the Son of God. The Son, now in glory, at the end of His work, is speaking of salvation already wrought out by Himself.

He is there, because He has been here; in the highest now, because He was in the lowest before; dispensing the fruit of grace now, as once He had gathered sympathies with the feeblest of us, and made an end of sin by the sacrifice of Himself; delivering from the bondage and fear of death now, because He once destroyed, through His own death, him that had the power of death.

Such an one may well entitle the day in which His name is published, and His virtues dispensed, to be called "the last."

Our duty it is to use Him and to trust Him in the place and character He thus fills, to consider Him, to hold fast by Him as our confidence and rejoicing, which is our answer to Him in this His place of glories. The epistle to the Hebrews is busy and constant in making Christ its object. It presents Him as now filling the heavens in various glories. It shows Him to us there, as the Purger of our sins, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Mediator of the new covenant, the Author of salvation and the Captain of salvation, the true Moses, the true Aaron, the true Joshua, and the Melchizedec of God.

And as this epistle is thus busy and constant in presenting Christ to us, so is it fervent and unwearied in exhorting us to maintain that attitude of heart that is the due answer to such an object. It would fain form in us a soul in harmony with these glories thus revealed in the object presented to us.

It tells us to give "earnest heed" to what we have heard, so full of authority is it. It tells us to "consider" Christ in His fidelity to Him that appointed Him to the gracious, wondrous offices of High Priest and Apostle of our profession. It tells us once and again, "to hold fast" by Him, to "come boldly" to the throne now erected in the heavens, and to go on in the study of the great subject of "perfection," which tells us of our sure salvation in Christ. It reproves us for not being "teachers," intimating by this, that we ought to have fully, and solidly, and clearly learned for ourselves the blessed lesson of grace and righteousness. It encourages us by the example of Abraham, who obtained the promise confirmed by an oath, so that we may have "strong consolation," and enter in full assurance of hope within the veil. And, again, it encourages us by Abraham, who took blessing from Melchizedec, who was but a shadow of the Son of God, in whose hand our blessing as surely lies. It would also have us lost in admiration at the dignity of the sacrifice which has been rendered to God for us, that we may know-and know with fullest, happiest assurance-the perfection and certainty of the purging of our conscience. It tells us to pass with boldness through the veil, and there to serve at an altar, as the priesthood of God, with eucharistic, thanksgiving offerings.

These things we find as we pass through the epistle, by which we learn that it proposes to form a mind in us, which, from its certainty, and strength, and liberty of faith, and brightness and assurance of hope, shall be somewhat of a suited answer to the glories of that object which it has lifted up before our souls.

When it calls us to "fear," or to "take heed," it is lest we should be tempted to turn our eye from that which it is thus ever keeping in our view. It never speaks of fear or of caution, as though we were to render that object a timid or suspicious thought. Surely otherwise. As it presents One to us full of glories, and glories all suited to our necessities, so it cherishes in us a heart, and mind, and conscience, full of light, and strength, and liberty.

The boldness of faith has been again and again exhibited all along the line of Scripture, in some of the saints of God, and is seen ever to have met a greeting and an answer from God.

Adam exhibits it. He came forth, naked as he was, at the bidding of the gospel, at the bidding of the good tidings about the death and resurrection of Christ, the bruised yet bruising seed of the woman, and at once talked of life in the midst of death, calling his wife "the mother of all living."

Abraham does the same. He does not consider the dead condition of his own body, nor that of Sarah. He has listened to a promise from the living God, the life-giver, and that promise occupies and commands his soul. It is everything to him, let circumstances be what they may, and the conditions of things outside that promise as hopeless as they can be.

Sarah, too, in her day, was bold. She did not consider her former unbelief and naughtiness when she laughed behind the tent-door, but in the light and power of the gift and grace of God, she would have the house left entirely for her and her Isaac. She would clear away from her spirit all that might cloud or chill it.

Jacob was under rebuke. His unbelief in the matter of Esau his brother had called forth the divine wrestler to withstand him. But even in such a moment as that, Jacob stands. He faints not under this rebuke-but knowing the Rebuker as he felt the rebuke, he lets Him know that He is not to go until He bless him. The day may be breaking, and it may be time to go, but the blessing must come first.

And how is this boldness again and again answered by the Lord? Always under some expression or another of its full acceptableness with Him. Adam gets a coat of skin made for him, and put on him by the Lord Himself. Abraham is promised a seed as many as the stars in the heaven for multitude. Sarah's word is confirmed at once by God Himself. And the Lord does not leave Bethel, whether the morning have broke or not, till He blesses as Jacob desired, and gives him a new and honorable name—a name that attaches to him and his seed to this day, and will as forever.

What harmonies are these! Grace abounding, faith full, certain, and confiding, and the Lord again in grace sealing this way of faith as with His whole heart!

Does the course of time change this? The scene may change, but God who fills it and orders it is one. Moses, after the patriarchs, illustrates this boldness. The Lord had said to him, that he must leave Him alone, and let His wrath wax hot against Israel, for they had now disowned Him for their own golden calf. But Moses will not hear of this. He speaks out to the Lord, telling Him that He had sworn by His own name to multiply His people as the stars of heaven. It was impossible that He could do as He was threatening. He must turn from His fierce anger. This was bold, but not too bold—and the Lord vindicates it all by doing all that Moses could desire and plead for. (Ex. 33)

David is in the same line, and of the same temper, with all these from the days of Adam. Ziklag is in ruins before him, and all that was there has been plundered. Cattle in their flocks and herds, nay, wives and children, have all been borne away by the invaders. Here is a scene, not only full of misery, but of reproach likewise. David's sin has to account for the ruin of Ziklag, as Adam's had to account for the ruin of creation. But what read we? "David encouraged himself in God." And what came of this? The Lord gave him a victory; and out of the hand of the Amalekite all, everything and everybody, was rescued; so that not a hoof was lost: together with spoil of the enemy, sent afterward to the cities of Israel as trophies of what the God of Israel, in grace and strength that abounded, had wrought for David. (1 Sam. 30)

Here were harmonies again! The boldness of faith and the abounding of grace—striking, blessed, precious concords!

Can we let centuries upon centuries pass, and still find the same? Yes; New Testament atmosphere is just the same. In the Gospels, we find the Lord again and again rebuking a "little" faith, but ever delighting in the approaches of a bold faith. No finer instance could there be of that, than what we get in the case of the palsied man and his friends. There, the roof was broken up, that the needy one might be let down before the Lord. A rude act, one might say, and done without leave or apology. But the Lord delighted in it, and sealed His acceptance of it at once. No rebuke was on His lips then. Confidence suits grace; ceremony stands in its way. Love delights in being used, but resents the reserve that would approach suspiciously. The blessed Jesus of the Gospels was the God who, of old, answered the bold faith of Adam, of Abraham, of Sarah, of Jacob, of Moses, and of David, and of thousands whom time would fail to tell of.

And the Holy Ghost who moved the apostles at the end of the book of God, is the Spirit of Him who acted all through, in days of patriarchs, prophets, and evangelists. This we find, for ensamples, in the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Hebrews.

The Galatian saints had given up this confidence. They had receded to the elements of the world, the spirit of the law, observing ordinances; by which the soul really loses sight of God—or, in the

language of the epistle, by which it proves that it has not the knowledge of Him. (Chapter 4:8, 9.) The Spirit, in the apostle, is fervent and indignant. He seeks to restore the harmony between God and the soul-the faith that answers grace-the liberty that suits adoption. He will have " Christ" in them, as He was for them, the Spirit of the Son, as He had given them the privileges of sons like Himself.

Thus is it throughout the volume. I have already considered the Epistle to the Hebrews in this connection-and thus it is, again we may say, all through Scripture.' A character of mind is formed in the saint by the Spirit of God answerable to the grace of God. These are divine harmonies. The riches of grace entertained by the faith and confidence of the soul, and that again sealed by the acceptance and delight of the Lord.

What consolation! How this tells us that we may assure our hearts before Him 1 How it verifies the word of Manoah's wife to her husband! " If he were pleased to kill us, he would not have accepted a meat-offering and a drink-offering at our hand." The greater includes the less. If He accepted worship, surely He had thoughts of peace. If He inspires and encourages this boldness of faith, and thus lets me know that He delights in it in His saints, surely this tells me of forgiveness of sins--that He who entertains this confident, assured attitude of heart in

His presence has provided for the remission of sins, without which none of this could possibly be between Him and us. The building, in its stateliness and strength, assumes a foundation. And accordingly, in such scriptures as the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, when unfolding the high conditions and character of our calling, the apostle takes up the forgiveness of our sins, somewhat by the way, as a thing implied and involved in what is taught us.

It is surely the foundation. It is Christ as on the cross that says, " The earth and its inhabitants are dissolved.; I bear up the pillars." The cross is the foundation of all blessing. The reconciliation made by the blood of atonement sustains all. That is true indeed, and the age of glory will have to recognize that through its own eternity. But the glory makes that a necessary truth. And the high conditions of our calling, this very boldness of which I am speaking, the mind of confidence and full assurance which the Spirit would form in us, may well leave the forgiveness of our sins, or the acceptance of our persons, as a grace of easy, natural, necessary admission by our souls.

The father never told the prodigal that he forgave him. To be sure he did not. It is among the exquisite touches of the parable, the absence of such a thing. It would grate upon the ear. Let higher things bespeak forgiveness. They can do it far better than the lips of the father. The fatted calf may tell it-the robe, the ring, and the shoes. The music and the dancing shall proclaim it, as with the voice of a trumpet.

## Boldness in the Day of Judgment

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See 1 John 4:13-17.

John says, teaching us under the Holy Ghost, " Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." John himself afterward experienced the boldness of which this scripture speaks.

In the Isle of Patmos he was brought into a day of judgment. The first revelation he had there of the Lord Jesus Christ was a revelation of Him in judicial glory. He saw the Son of man standing among the golden candlesticks, with eyes of flame, a voice as of many waters, a countenance as of the sun in his strength, and with feet as though they burnt in a furnace. And all this, and more of the like kind, was a solemn, terrible exhibition of Christ in the place of judgment. Before Him John falls as one dead. But the Lord speaks comfortably to him. " Fear not," says He, " I am the First and the Last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." By this He would impart to His servant, though now in the presence of judicial glory, all the virtue of His own condition, as the One who was in the place of victory over all the power of the enemy. As He Himself was, so would He have John to be. (See Rev. 1)

This was excellent and wonderful, and full of blessing. And John at once proves in his soul the power of all this, and acquires "boldness" in that "day of judgment." For now he listens to the voice of this Son of man challenging and judging the churches, but he listens unmoved (enjoying the boldness he had acquired) from beginning to end.

This, I may say, has a great character in it. But still more. Another scene of judgment succeeds this of the Son of man among the candlesticks, and John is set in the presence of it. He is summoned by the sound of a trumpet to heaven, and heaven was then preparing itself for judgment. Thrones were there, and they were thrones of judgment, for the elders which sat on them were clothed in white raiment; and voices, lightning, and thunder were seen and heard there, witnesses that the Lord was about to rise up out of His holy place for judgment and in wrath.

But John still maintains the boldness he had acquired. And so all through the action of the book. Trumpets, vials, earthquakes, fire, smoke, and other terrible sights and symbols, enough to make a Moses quake, as in a day of Sinai, pass before him. The rider on the white horse and the great white throne are seen, and also the scene of " the second death" in its terrors. But John is as unmoved as the living creatures and crowned elders themselves. They were on high, but he was still " in this world;" they were glorified, but he was still in the body; but he is as calm as they are. As they were, so was he-such was his boldness in that day of judgment. And when the sealed book is seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, and a loud voice, as of a -strong angel challenges all to loose it, instead of dreading the moment when such an awful volume should be opened, he weeps because no one was found equal to do so. He longs to have the secret of the throne disclosed, though that throne was a throne of judgment.

Thus is it with John in the Book of the Apocalypse. But we may observe, that something of this same security and its attending boldness, in days of judgment, had been enjoyed by the elect of God in earlier times-as in the time of the flood, in the day of the overthrow of Sodom, at the time of the exodus, and also at the time of the passage of the Jordan.. These were days of judgment; but the security thrown around the elect was nothing less than God's own. He was imparting His own safety, so to speak, to His people then.

He shut Noah in the ark with His own hand. The waters were then the ministers of His judgment, but his hand kept them outside. And they could no more prevail over God's hand, than they could over His throne. His safety, therefore, was Noah's. As He was, so was Noah, in that day of judgment.

So in the judgment of the cities of the plain, even in the behalf of such an one as Lot. Lot was saved so as by fire, out of the fire-a salvation in nowise honorable to himself. He suffered loss, for his works were all burnt up. But the angel could do nothing till Lot was clean delivered. And I ask, was not that also as it were divine security?

In the night of Egypt it was the same. He who carried the sword had appointed the blood. He, to whom the vengeance belonged, the Judge who was executing the judgment, had ordained and pledged the deliverance. "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Was not this imparting His own security again to His people in a day of judgment? I say not how far they may have experienced or tasted "boldness" in their spirit, but this was title to it.

And so, in the passage of the Jordan. The waters were then, as in the day of Noah, ready to overflow their banks, as in the time of harvest. But the priests were in the midst of them, and the ark or the presence of God likewise. And there the ark and the priests remained till all the people had passed over. Jesus was in the boat, and He must sink if the disciples did. The safety of the camp was as the safety of the ark. As it was, so were they, though amid the swellings of Jordan. The judgment of Canaan was beginning, but Israel was under divine securities.

All this witnesses again and again how the Lord shares His own condition with His elect in the hour of their most solemn necessity. He is beyond judgment, above it, the executor of it, but the value of His own place He imparts to them, while they are still in the place or world that is to be judged.

Thus do we see it from the beginning. But our Scripture (1 John 4:13-17) tells us that we now enter on our title to this sane boldness in somewhat a new way.

The apostle declares that " the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world," and that the love which thus deals with us is a "perfect" love. That the Father should so set His heart upon our return to Him-that in order to accomplish it, He should send the Son from the bosom, this is perfect love, And the fruit of this perfect love is nothing less than this, (and of course it could not be,) that we have boldness in the day of judgment. (See 1 John 4:13-17.)

Noah, as we have seen, had boldness in such a day, because the hand of God had shut him in. Lot also, because the angel who acted under the God of judgment, could do nothing till Lot was safe. So Israel in Egypt, and Israel in the Jordan, as we have also seen, had like divine security from the ordinance or presence of God. But we, the saints of this gospel-day, whom the Holy Ghost is teaching through the apostle, have " boldness in the coming day of judgment by a more

excellent and wonderful title-because we are loved with a perfect love. God has put the value of the Son of the bosom upon us, and the love that has done that is a perfect love.

This surpasses. Our boldness has truly a wondrous character attached to it. It is conferred on us, not merely by the hand, or by the ordinance of God, but by His love. Noah, and Lot, and the children of Israel, in their several days of judgment, might have said, "As he is, so are we;" because God had made Himself their security. His safety was theirs, as we have seen. But we, the saints of this day, resolve our security into the love of God, as they did into the hand or ordinance of God. The security is the same - equal and perfect in each case. But ours is the witness of a nearer and more affecting title. Ours is personal. Noah was in the ark; we are in God. " He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." And in a new sense we say, " As he is, so are we in this world." We are loved as He is" accepted," as we read in another place, " in the Beloved." We are not only secured, but loved. Ours is boldness in the day of judgment, because there is with us or upon us the perfect love of Him to whom judgment belongs.

## Christ a Witness

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"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."-John 17:3.

In a sense, man, when under law, is principal rather than God, for all depends on his obedience. Man is the active party there. It was thus in the Garden of Eden. Not only Adam's own enjoyment of his estate there, but the Creator's continual enjoyment of the work of His hands (as Creator) alike hung upon Adam's allegiance. And it was thus also under Moses. Not only Israel's continuance in Canaan, but Jehovah's place in the midst of His land and people, under the first covenant, 'rested on the answer to this question, Would Israel be obedient?

Under grace it is otherwise. There God becomes principal; and the sinner's blessing depends on Him and His faithfulness. God is the active party: He is the giver, man the receiver. And this is as it should be. This puts things in a moral beauty, and in right relationship to each other, as well as raises God's delight and glory in the scene before Him and under Him; and increases and secures the blessedness of the creature.

This distinction, too, brings out the Lord in the different characters of a Judge and a Witness.

The law makes God a Judge; for He has to see that the one bound to Him, as under law, is keeping his place and doing his duty. The gospel makes Him a Witness; for He has, in grace, to reveal what He is, and not to be watching and proving what man is. The law makes man its object; the gospel makes God its object.

What a grander and more blessed thing this is! The glory of being a judge of man has no glory, by reason of the glory of being a witness to Himself, which excelleth.

Now, the character of a witness is that which the Lord Jesus at once assumes in St. John, and maintains throughout. In a sense, He is a Judge in St. Matthew; because there He is seen as coming to look after the condition of Israel, whether they were ready for Him, and thus equal and entitled to hold their place as God's Israel. Such a ministry as that in a sense made the Lord a Judge, as the law did; for Israel's condition was to answer the old question, should the link between the Lord and His people be continued or broken?

In John's gospel it is quite otherwise. The unfaithfulness of Israel is assumed at the very beginning. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And this being so, Jesus is a witness. Man having failed in the place of responsibility, God becomes principal in the exercise of grace, or in the ministry of Himself and His salvation to sinners. He is therefore at once called "the Word"-so called, because He is a witness, or one who declares God and the Father.

Other evangelists, as well as God, call Him "the Son;" because that is His personal title. John alone calls Him "the Word;" because that is His characteristic title in his gospel.

Being then a witness, we have to notice the character of His testimony; and We find it to be this: it tells of God, or witnesses to God, in such form as suits a sinner. So that, we further read, not only that He is " the Word," who, having taken flesh, dwells among us; but does so, " full of grace and truth"-full of truth, as revealing God, full of grace, as suiting sinners. This is simple.

Accordingly, it is only sinners, convicted ones, who are joined to the Lord, in the progress of this gospel. And this tells us what the Lord is, in this gospel. He is a witness of God, or of the Father, to sinners. He will not be a judge; He will not be a king; but a witness; and that in a ruined world. This shows itself strongly in chap. viii. The Pharisees would have made Him a judge. They would have seated Him on Mount Sinai; but He has nothing to do there. He refuses, with a silence that is significant, and a simplicity that is sublime. He writes on the ground, as though He heard them not. He who had come from heaven as the One that was in the bosom of the Father, could not seat Himself on the fiery hill. But refusing to be a judge, He at once becomes a witness, raising Himself up and saying, " I am the light of the world." His office is to bring back light, or God, to that world which, through the lie of the serpent, had lost Him, and lies in the darkness of being without Him. And thus, " the light of the world" brings, as He further says, " the light of life."

The Witness of God is the Quickener of sinners. And in order to that, as He still further tells us, He consents to be " lifted up," like the brazen serpent on the pole, made a victim for the altar, that life may be brought (the only way it could be brought) in righteousness through death and atonement. And yet, further still, He lets us know that the accepting of this Witness and His testimony makes the sinner " free."

All this we get in John 8:1-31. And this acceptance of the testimony of this Witness is faith. Faith is that obedience which a witness must look for: conformity to its demands is the due answer to law-faith to testimony.

I pass on to chap. 18. There this same Jesus of John's gospel is in the very character which He had taken up at the beginning. He is a witness still. (See ver. 37.) Pilate had said to Him, " Art thou a king, then?" Jesus owns this. He avows His kingdom. " Thou sayest that I am a king." And this is pregnant with the intimation that the day will come when He shall take His kingdom, and exercise His rights there. But He plainly tells him that, as for the present, His business was to bear witness to the truth. He who had before refused to act as a judge, now postpones to act as a king, that He might be, and that only, a witness to God, and of God, in the midst of a world of self-ruined sinners. This He lets Pilate know was His then present ministry. He had been born, He had come into the world, for the end of such a ministry; and we find, all through this gospel, from the beginning of it, and now at the end of it; He had been faithful to it. And this loved and cherished work we know He is pursuing still, all through this gospel-day, till every one," as He further says, " that is of the truth," i.e., belongs to God in grace, " hears his voice."

Simple and consistent, yet full of grace in its glory, all this is.

To His glory, by and by, it will be, that, as a judge, He will clear a defiled world of its corrupters. To His glory it will then be, that, as a king, He will rule a restored world in righteousness. To His still brighter glory, and still deeper joy, is it, that He now bears witness of the grace and salvation of God in a world of sinners; holding up God's truth in the face of the old serpent's lie, and manifesting God's love in answer to the charges of His accuser.

Now, this being so, He being a witness, we are to acquaint ourselves with Him. This is our duty. And the fruit of this is life; as He says, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (Chapter 17:3.) And this knowledge of Him, which is eternal life, I may here add, appears beautifully to show itself in cases where either the convicted sinner or the rebuked saint is able, morally able, in spite of the conviction or rebuke, to abide in His presence. And such cases this same gospel gives us. This may be easily apprehended; because distance from God is the state or region of death. His presence is the place of life.

When a soul can abide near Him, or with Him, in spite of conviction; that is, though it have sinned, and been found out, life is in that soul. And it is only the knowledge of Him—the knowledge of Him in Jesus, whom He has sent, (which is indeed the only knowledge,) that gives the sinner, or the soul, this capacity, this moral power, to abide the divine presence.

The Samaritan of chap. 4., and the convicted sinner of chap. viii., illustrate this capacity. They are exposed, deeply and fully; but they do not leave Him till all is perfected in their condition.

Adam, too, in the beginning, in Gen. 3 and the Joshua of Zech. 3, illustrate the same. And, I may add, the prodigal in the parable is made to do the same. Each and all of these, though with loss of character, exposed, convicted, left as without a word to say for themselves, remain in the divine presence, which is the region, the native land, of life.

Adam might have remained under cover; and the convicted sinner might have gone out with her accusers: but they, like all in like faith with them, stay, though guilty. This was life, the knowledge of God in Jesus. Nay, it is eternal life. To keep the law would he life; but it would be life only for the day, or by the day. The same life would be to be acquired by obedience each succeeding day. Fresh title to it must be made each successive moment. The law, therefore, is never said to give eternal life. But this knowledge of Him, which restores us, sinners as we are, to the presence of God, is eternal life. It is drawn from Him who has eternal life in Himself; and having abolished death by putting away sin, (the secret, or spring, or principle of death,) thus has it for us sinners.

But, beside these cases of convicted sinners, we have cases of rebuked saints, having moral capacity to stand in the presence of God. And this capacity is the pulse of that life which they already have, as the capacity of the convicted sinner to stand in that same presence was the first symptom of that life. We have instances of such rebuked saints as Jacob, David, and the Peter of John's gospel. Jacob is rebuked, and rebuked sharply, in Gen. 32, where the Lord wrestles with him; but Jacob holds on; yea, though in the process of the wrestling or the rebuke, his thigh is put out of joint. This is very fine faith. This is courage which can only be accounted for by a rich, precious knowledge of God. And he holds on, in spite also of the word of the Lord: "Let me go, for the day breaketh." This is very fine, and the Lord delights in it. He gives him a blessing and a name of honor, and then joy in the Spirit. So David, He had sadly transgressed by going over to the Philistines; and the Lord very solemnly rebukes Him for this, by allowing the enemy to sack his town of Ziklag, and then to burn it. (1 Sam. 30) But he so blessedly knows the Lord, knows Him whom he had believed, that in spite of all this, which was surely enough to make a man a coward, David holds up: he-encourages himself in the Lord, as we read. And this again, as with Jacob, was precious faith, such faith as can only be accounted for by the soul having rich knowledge of God. And God acknowledges this faith. He gives David a victory, and the recovery of all that he had lost, yea, and a capture of such spoils as enables him to send presents to all the towns of his native

land, so that the dishonor he had brought on his good name, by going over to the uncircumcised, may be obliterated and forgotten forever in these fresh glories. What riches of grace in God! What beauty in that faith which is the workmanship of the Spirit in the saints!

But Peter is another of these rebuked, yet believing saints, in the day of John's gospel. He sinned, denying His Lord with an oath; but He knows Him against whom He thus sinned, and this knowledge enables him to exercise that faith which keeps him in the presence of the Lord. As soon as he heard from John that the Lord was on the shore, he threw himself into the water to reach Him.

Was not this another pulse of that life which this saint had through the knowledge of God in Jesus? How strongly, I may rather say, is that pulse felt to be beating in all this! And blessedly again does He, who is the fountain of this life, own this life in Peter, as afore He had in Jacob and in David. He prepares a dinner on the shore, where He, and Peter, and His companions sit together. And Peter is set in full office again, pledged a strength and a presence that shall carry him through all temptations, fiercer by far than those under which he had lately fallen, and moreover, put on the way to the heavenly glory, as in the train of his divine Master—all this, surely, as fully blotting out the remembrance and the stain he had incurred, as the victory, and the spoils, and the distributions of David had obliterated from his kindred and his country the remembrance of his dishonorable sojourn among the uncircumcised.

What living histories are these! And these stories of convicted sinners and rebuked saints, finding in spite of shame and challenge, a home in the divine presence, are true to this day.

Eternal life is still gained by the sinner, when such knowledge of God in Christ is communicated to him as enables him, morally enables him, and righteously entitles him, to take his place in the presence of God. For that presence again we may remember is the region of life. The Son of the bosom of the Father is such a witness of God in this world that sinners who by faith receive His testimony, as delivered for their sins and raised again for their justification, enter into eternal life. It is eternal life to know Him, to know Him who says, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."

## Christ's Association of Himself With His People on Earth

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### Psalm 16

I need hardly say that there are many aspects in which we may consider the character of our Lord Jesus Christ; for he is the summing up of all possible beauty and perfection in Himself. But He is more than this. He is the means and measure by which we can judge of everything besides. If I want to know God, I must learn Him in Christ. If I want to know what man, is, in perfection, I learn it by Christ. In a word, all real truth is learned, and learned only, in or by Christ. Whether it be man, or sin, or death, or life, or love, or hatred, all is manifested in Christ, or by Christ. Hence the importance of having the soul occupied with Christ-feeding upon Him, since He is the only transforming power, and the only standard of excellence, and the light by which all things else are made manifest.

It is not the joy of deliverance that is presented in this psalm, nor the work by which deliverance is accomplished; but rather the deliverer in his humiliation and walk on earth, drawn out as the attractive object of our souls. For Christ is an object in a double way. He is an object in glory, to attract our souls upward from the earth, as it is said, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." But He is no less an object in His humiliation as presenting the embodiment of all moral excellence before God, and that in a world through which we are called to pass.

If we contemplate Christ in glory, this gives us the definiteness of that hope to which we are predestinated-for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. "We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." This awakens the energy of hope, of joy, and gladness. If we are delivered from death, through the blood of Christ, we are also planted in Him as the objects of God's delight. Christ's position before the Father, and His relation to Him, mark our position and relationship, through infinite grace; for He says, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." We are like Him in the sight of His Father, and our praises should not jar with His.

"We wait (it is true) for the hope of righteousness by faith; "not for "righteousness by faith," because we have that, or rather we are that-but we wait for the hope that belongs to it; and we know what that is, for it is that which Christ has now in glory. And we are to be "changed into the same image from glory to glory." Christ is our righteousness, and we have it, or rather we are it; "we are made the righteousness of God in him." But we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness. The Spirit was sent down to witness that Christ is glorified; and hence He becomes an object to us in the glory.

It is not good for the soul only to contemplate Christ as an agent, important as that is in its place. No question, if I am feeding on Christ, dwelling on Him with admiration, and delight, and joy, as the object of my soul, it presupposes a knowledge of Him as an agent, accomplishing redemption by His death, and having taken His place on high for us, and so maintaining the integrity of our

position before God and our communion with Him. But if I am looking at the priesthood of Christ, precious and necessary as it is, He is still before me, more as an agent than the object of my soul. As priest, He is a servant in grace. To see Him girded thus for service, doubtless draws out the affections, and gives power and energy, and brightens our hearts all along the road. But then, all manner of exercise of heart comes in here; because Christ deals with us in this according to what we practically are. The priesthood of Christ has to do with weakness and infirmities, and the ever-varying exercises of the soul; and hence it is said, " we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Righteousness ever abides in God's presence, and hence the ground of the restoration of communion when it has been lost. If any man sin, we are not driven to a distance, but the soul is restored because Christ has prayed for us. It is not that we have to ask Him to intercede, or to exercise His priesthood for us, but that He has done so; for the movement of grace is always on his heart. The priesthood of Christ is for those who are righteous, who are redeemed, in order to carry them on through the wilderness of this world. He is their Advocate, constantly carrying on their affairs, and the Holy Ghost is spoken of by the same title (for "the Comforter" is indeed the Advocate). Thus Christ applies, in divine wisdom, to the heart, all that we have by virtue of His intercession. He is perfectly cognizant of all that is in us, and knows how to meet it. It is not the idea that I am going to glory, but that God having set me in perfect righteousness, He teaches me by the priesthood of Christ to discern between good and evil, according to His light, or according to His nature. I am utterly dependent in my condition, and He feeds me day by day with manna, as I need. As He said of Israel: " Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 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 only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years." (Deut. 8:2-4.)

He never forgot Israel for a single day, because all their supplies in the wilderness depended on His remembrance and faithful care; and His care as our High Priest and Advocate is the same to us now. In all this Christ is an agent; but in this psalm He is an object-an object in His humiliation, and more properly, the food of our souls. He is not our food in glory, but in humiliation. We feed on Him here, as a living and dead Christ. Christ does not say in John 6, "The bread of God is He" which went up to heaven; but " He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world."

That which especially draws out our affections is the tracing of Christ's passage through this world, through everything down here about which He has to deal with us. When He was on earth, the Father could delight in Him in the beginning of His path, on account of His inherent excellence; and at the close, because of His developed perfection. He could say, " This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" and God has given us for delight, the very same object in which He delights. What do we say, then? Why, in weakness and poverty, it is true, yet surely, with unhesitating confidence, we say the same! We cannot indeed reach His perfectness in our thoughts; but then the very sense we have of the poverty and weakness of our apprehensions is because the Father has shown us something of his perfectness.

The Father, in communicating His own delight, does not say, This is my beloved Son in whom you ought to be well pleased, but in whom I am well pleased. How marvelous that the Father should

tell us what His thoughts are about His Son, and what His delight is in Him! It was not what was true about Christ that attracted the poor woman in Simon's house, (Luke 7:37-50,) but it was the beauty and attractiveness of Christ Himself, that absorbed her heart. She loved and admired Him for what He was, before she knew what he was for her. When she knew that, she could reflect upon it, and this would give the ground of constancy to her affections and delight. Jesus commended all she did-her tears-her affection-her silence-because all were drawn forth by her contemplation of Himself.

But before we can properly feed on Christ as our food, we must know Him as our righteousness. Some are attracted to Christ for awhile, and have joy in Him, but for the want of a knowledge of righteousness lose their joy, and know not how to find it again. Righteousness sets us in peace before God, and then we have fellowship, and can speak of it; as the Apostle says, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." And on the same ground we have fellowship one with another. Connected with this there are three things: 1st. Walking in the light as God is in the light. 2nd. Consequent fellowship and communion one with another. 3rd. Being perfectly cleansed by the blood. When the soul has the sense of being perfectly cleansed by the blood of Christ, and His death is thus entered into, there is the ground for feeding on Christ, and occupancy with Him as our object. And this the Lord reckons on as a result of His love. He says to his disciples, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." He reckons on their affections making them glad on account of His joy; and He only refers to his joy, to show how He looks for their sympathy to be engaged with what concerned Himself. This however cannot be until salvation is known. But Christ should be our object; and dwelling on what He is, the food of our souls.

Two things form perfection in the creature before God: dependence and I obedience. Independence is sin-necessarily sin. All effort after a freedom of this nature is but an attempt to break away from the sense of creature-dependence on God. The action of our own proper will is sin.

When Christ became man He took - the character of a dependent, obedient one. His Father's will was not only His guide in all He did, but His motive in doing it: and that was His perfection. Observe the place of dependence he takes in the first verse of this Psalm: "Preserve me, O God for in thee do I put my trust." It is beautiful to see His obedience, and beautiful to see it in dependence too.

Whenever the Father has His rightful place in our affections He has it in everything. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Take the example of a child in pleasing a father; love makes it a matter of perfect indifference to the child's heart as to what the thing is that is to be done; it is done to please its father, and that is motive enough for anything. And how does the heart look back with delight, and trace this in Christ, in all his ways in his pathway through this world. He had all power, but never used it to serve Himself. From the manger to the cross it was the embodiment of the word, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God!" Because He was above all evil, He was able to go through all evil, unassailable by it; while at the same time He was capable of touching and dealing with those who were in it.

In the words, "I said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord," Christ takes the place of the servant to God; and there is not a step in the path of life-divine life-but He trod it, in order to show it to us.

Surely it was enough to draw out the delight of the Father to see the Son, as man, walking down here, in everything dependent upon His pleasure, and in everything obedient to His will. And we know, indeed, that it was so, from the opened heavens at the baptism of John, and from the voice from the excellent glory-" this is my beloved Son."

In everything He manifested a blessed, perfect dependence. He came out from the Father, and carried back into His presence, a man with the stamp of the same blessed perfectness which he had with the Father before the world was.

He says, " Thou wilt show me the path of life;" and He passed through death in dependence on the Father. Adam found the path of death in his folly; but back to the path of life he never could get. The trees of knowledge and of life to this day are perplexing the minds of men; but no reason nor philosophy of man can reconcile responsibility and the gift of life. Man cannot make it out. From the beginning he has tried to stand in responsibility, whenever the mind has been awakened to acknowledge the claims of God, without a knowledge of His grace. But in everything he has failed; and all that he has done by it is to earn death. Christ comes into the place of ruin and death, and makes out and shows us the path of life-that " path which the vulture's eye hath not seen." He was the life; and he tracks a path for us in the wild waste-" in the wilderness," as it is said, " where there is no way." He finds it and shows it to us, and we have to learn to tread it in dependence and obedience. To Him it must be through death; therefore He says, If any man will follow me, " he must take up his cross." Christ would rather die than disobey: there is His perfectness. We have to tread in the same steps; but Christ before us is the One we have to look to, to think on, to feed upon, in this wild waste of sin and death. It is not the quantity we do that marks our spirituality; but the perfectness with which we present Christ.

" In thy presence there is fullness of joy." There are two parts of blessedness-being with Christ, and being like Christ. If we were constantly before God in the consciousness of being unlike Him, it would only distress. But we shall be with Him and like Him; and the consciousness of that is blessedness. With Him we shall enjoy the Father's countenance; crowned and sitting on thrones, but delighting to cast our crowns down before Him, and to say, " Thou art worthy"- our souls being filled with the excellency of Him who is in the midst.

The saints, the excellent of the earth, with whom Christ associates Himself, are all His delight. No matter how feeble-how failing; he says they are the excellent, and His delight is in them-not in their state, it may be, but in them. And He must have them with Him. " Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am." He must have them with Him. He will be in company with them in the glory, in the presence of His Father, where is " fullness of joy." And oh! may it rest on our minds in what way Christ associates Himself with the excellent down here. And may our hearts dwell on God's delight in Him, and on His perfectness down here, that we may make it our delight to trace His footsteps, weigh His words, and feed on Him.

## Communion, and the Ground of It

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Genesis 18:17-19

I have been occupied lately with this word as being a very descriptive display of the ground of intimacy on which the Lord sets His people with Himself. In the case of Abraham, the condition of the revelation put him in that place, but the testimony to us is, that we have the place in which he stood, though in a much higher sense. He stood on the earth, the place of judgment, but we are altogether out of the place of judgment, enjoying the blessing itself.

The men rose up and looked toward Sodom. The Lord directed them in judgment; and Abraham went with them to show them the way. The Lord makes His saints His companions; not invariably, but still He does. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? but we have the mind of Christ." Thus in the communications God has made to us, He has made us His own companions in the best way; for I do not know a better way in which any one can show his love to another, than by communicating to him his thoughts and feelings. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." So we are to walk with Christ, until He comes and takes us up to Himself. The exercise and path of faith is down here.

Abraham went with the men to show them the way only. And mark, the Church is above judgment; I don't mean above discipline to do them good. Lot looked towards Sodom, but Abraham was out of it. Abraham being the Lord's companion is not only delivered out of the judgment, but when the Lord is going to judge He must tell Abraham about it. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, for I know him," &c. So it is with us. The ground of this communication is the thought the Lord has about us. He has centered His love in us, therefore He lets us into His confidence. He says, If I have brought Abraham into this place, I will introduce him into it. So God has made known to us the mystery of His will, because of the place in which He has put the Church in Christ.

There is great blessing in this word, "I know him." The Lord does not talk about those He is going to judge in that way. When He talks about judgment, He talks about going down to see, and till He has fully investigated it, He won't touch them. It is not so with the saints. He has no need, so to speak, to go down to see about them, for He fully knows them. As He said of Abraham, "I know him." The cry of Sodom had come up before God; but before going to execute judgment, He will go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it "which is come unto me."

"The men went towards Sodom, but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." That is blessed. For if the Lord knows Abraham, so that he is able to get the blessing, he stays with the Lord Himself. He is going to bring judgment on the world, and He won't smite till He can't help it; but no judgment coming on the world can separate Abraham from God. God's eye so rests upon Abraham, that he rests quiet in God. So it is with us. Whatever trial may be coming on the world, our place is to abide with the Lord Himself; and then, like Abraham, the effect of having drunk into this grace will be, we shall be calm, quiet, and happy. Our place is not to go down to search out the depths of

iniquity, but to let the cry come up to us. There will be Lots many, but let us be with God on the mountain, abiding in perfect peace with the Lord Himself.

Abraham being in perfect peace had nothing to ask for himself, and was therefore free to intercede for others. So it was in the case of Abimelech. If Abraham be a prophet, if he has this intimacy with the mind of the Lord, let him pray for these. So it is with us. " If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." The possession of the Lord's mind gives the power of intercession for others, not like wrestling Jacob to get blessing for himself, though we may have to wrestle for ourselves and to get individual blessing. Here it is communion, and the knowledge of this communion produces peace and joy. There is reverence of course, " I am but dust to ashes," but perfect intimacy. And the Lord went His way " as soon as he had done communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place." Abraham's position was with the Lord, in perfect peace, in unquestioned confidence, having nothing to settle with God, but on the ground on which he can enjoy perfect communion with Him.

## Fragments of Teaching on Ephesians 4:1-18

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One cannot help seeing the profound love such a passage as this breathes, as well as the profound interest and delight the Lord takes in blessing. A Father's thoughts of giving to his children take their measure very much from the love he bears them. What must be the thoughts, then, of the heart of our God for us, the objects of that love, abject sinners as we are, taken up by Him to show the greatness of His love. It is by Christ He does all. When He sets about to bless, it is by Christ the Son of His love. It is an immense foundation for us to rest on; not only deep, but large; not only wide, but strong. He went down to the lowest place of death, and went up to the highest place in glory, to the throne of God. All between these extremes is filled up by Christ, so that nothing can escape Him. Here is strength for me, a poor sinner; something to rest on it is not distant from us; but we have the consciousness of its being in and around us. It is said of the city in Revelation, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." This Lamb is nearer now to my heart than any besides. He has known me better than any; better than I know myself. This Christ, who dwells in our hearts by faith, is the one we shall meet on High. Aye, I shall find one in heaven nearer and dearer to my heart than any one I know on earth. None is so near to us as the Christ that is in us; and none is so near to God as His Christ. Present confidence in Christ is needed in trial; for if there were one thing in which I could not rest in Christ it would be dreadful. All our best affections are the cause of our greatest distresses, because of sin coming in, and death by sin separating the dearest ties. We must have trial and conflict in passing through this wilderness; but if the heart is kept trusting, every trial gives a man to know more and more of the divine sympathy there is in God Himself; more and more of what there is in Christ to meet the need; more of Christ, as possessing Him. "I bare thee on eagles' wings, and brought thee unto myself;" there we find all the unfoldings of what God is in Christ. I cannot do without Christ. I want manna in the wilderness; God gives it me; manna and water too, and Christ Himself in it all. Our natural portion as Christians is to enjoy God. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which he hath given to us." We dwell in God. God's love is infinite in measure; but I am in it. I dwell in it and He dwells in me. I, a poor nothing, dwell in Him. "Builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; " that is the Church's vocation. What a thought! What a bringing down, not of heaven, but of something more; by special blessing, bringing Him down to dwell in us. God would not dwell in angels. There is not the same need in them; but He will make Himself better known to angels by His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. What is the first practical result of this calling to be the habitation of God through the Spirit? "With all lowliness and meekness," a vessel of God; all the passions of the flesh there, but having the presence of God making us unspeakably happy, for that is our portion. A man who is humble needs not to be humbled. The lowly One is the pattern of all lowliness. I know what water is by drinking; and I know what sweetness is by tasting; and if I know God it is by His being in me; and collectively we look one upon the other and see God in all. God is come to take possession of our hearts, and be the spring of the actions of each heart. He comes to make us love, because He loves. We shall find it is fully so in heaven.

" For the perfecting of the saints." Christ is the object of His thoughts, and must be of mine. I must have these loved ones like Christ! This is the end of all the communion and all the exercises of our hearts together in ministering to you and you to me. The object is to grow up into Christ; and all the flow of Christian affection we have here is to this end. I look at any brother here whom I may have never seen before, and I feel a greater union with him than with my nearest natural tie, and I know we are going to be in heaven together. Enjoyment of this fellowship shuts out the world. You are not now thinking of its troubles and cares, you have left them outside, the flesh cannot enter into this fellowship. The more we are individually full of divine things the more will this communion together be realized. If two together are both spiritually-minded, they open the sluices of blessing which all our cares in the world cannot dry up. That power of the Holy Ghost which makes us overcomers here, will make us full of enjoyment in heaven. Our common joy now is the union of our affections to Him and to one another, which when we are there will be complete.

## Exodus 20

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There are two parts in this solemn chapter - the first, God announcing Himself in the claims of His holiness, which could only be answered in the people's distance from God, and in the terror which filled their minds; (see ver. 1-22;) the second unfolds the symbols of grace, by which the people are brought to God in the acceptance of worship-the presence of God with them, and the consequent fullness of blessing. (Ver. 22-26.)

The most terrible result of sin is, that by it man has lost God. There are many deplorable effects and consequences of sin, as Scripture declares and experience proves; but there is no moral effect connected with it so terrible as that by it man has lost God. Now, the object of Scripture is to meet this consequence of sin, in the only way in which it is possible it should be met; that is, by a revelation of God; and so restoring God to man. Moreover, it may be said, that all true knowledge of ourselves results from our knowledge of God.

The law is often erroneously called " a transcript of God's character;" but surely it is not this, or it would never have been said, in contrast, " The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law is not God Himself, however it may emanate from God: neither does it present what God is for man at all, but simply what man must be for God, supposing that its requirements could be met.

But "grace and truth" are God Himself, presenting to us the spontaneous actings of His nature-His heart- toward us. There is no grace in the giving of the law; not even if we take it in the divine summary which Christ Himself gives of it: " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,... and thy neighbor as thyself." This is not grace: it is requirement. It does not reveal what God is; but declares what man ought to do. What do we find down to the eleventh verse of this chapter but enactments to protect God, in His rights, and honor, and sovereignty, from man? Man is so rebelliously bold in his ignorance, that he is ready to rush on the bosses of God's buckler. Hence, the first proclamations of law in this chapter are to set bounds to man's wickedness, which would invade the rights and honor of God. See men now rushing recklessly to battle and to death. Do they know what they are doing in their blind ignorance? Do they know what hell and perdition are? And would they brave the terrors of the Almighty? How affecting it is to think, that if God speaks to man in his present condition in the way of law and requirement, He must first protect Himself from man's violence and reckless ignorance: and if He proceeds farther, He must guard us against ourselves and against one another!

So that the first table of the law, as it is called, shows that we are haters of God; and the second, that we are " hateful, and hating one another."

In the 18th verse it is said, " And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off." This is the simple accompaniment of divine majesty, and the people, thus under law -which is but another expression of their being under sin-remove and stand afar off! It is but

the expressive condition of any soul that has to stand upon any law or requirement. Nothing brings nigh to God but the absoluteness of His grace. "Ye who sometimes were far off are brought nigh." How? "By the blood of Christ!" But nothing will get you near to God as long as you stand in law in any way. The gospel gives life-not a spirit of lawlessness or insubjection-and in that life we live to God in subjection to Christ. "The grace of God which brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness."

Law, as we see in verse 19, begets the desire for priesthood, or a medium of communication between the soul and God: for the people "said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." But the whole purpose of God is lost if we have not Himself. He wants us and will have us near to Himself, and our consciences must have God, if they are to be "perfect" and at rest. God's heart is set on speaking Himself to us; and until He is heard in the soul speaking peace through the blood of the Lamb, God's purpose is not answered.

We come now to the second part of the chapter, which presents the symbol of grace, for the law gives no altar of worship or meeting-place with God. First, "ye shall not make with me gods of silver;" which forbids any human ideas of purity (of which silver is the symbol) to be associated with the ground of approach to God or to be mingled with our worship of Him. "Neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold." Gold is the symbol of righteousness, the thought of which must be utterly separated from the sinner's heart in drawing nigh to God. We are not to come because we are better than others, but to come just as we are. This is still prohibition necessary to separate man from the thoughts which his ignorance of God, and consequent ignorance of himself, would produce. But now we reach the point of positive command, "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

This positive command lets out God's thoughts of grace and truth, and presents the true and only ground of association with Himself. It marks the place where He would accomplish the blessed purpose of His bosom; for He would meet man in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The body of Christ is the altar of earth-the place of atonement or sacrifice and worship. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost; so that there can be no thought of our seeking God in heaven, but on earth. For He has come down to earth in the person of Christ-and on earth that sacrifice has been offered which atones for guilt; and that blood has been shed that "cleanses us from all sin." And hence Christ becomes the meeting-place of the soul with God, in the joy of deliverance and acceptance. For, in truth, Christ is our altar and priest and sacrifice. He is all and in all. "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." Every resource God has rests in Christ; and it becomes ours in Christ. If the altar were made of stone, it was not to be of hewn stone. An Ebenezer may be erected, but that is all. It is folly to think that we can do any more for ourselves after we have once come to the altar of earth. We can do nothing to make ourselves more beautiful than we are presented in Christ. If we attempt it, we only pollute that which is divinely pure and perfect. Neither are there to be steps up to this altar, lest our nakedness be shown. Salvation is not progressive; it is accomplished by Christ. And if we think of raising ourselves to Him by a single step, we but discover our own nakedness. The altar is level to us. Its approach is direct; and if there be a single thought, whether as to acceptance or worship, added to the altar of earth, that is so far a step, and only discovers our nakedness. It is something to raise us to God, or to make our worship acceptable to God, that is not Christ.

## Extract From a Letter

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It is quite right to humble ourselves to the very dust, if called to it. But I must not magnify my grace and humility to the shame of my precious Lord and Savior. He has a claim in this matter, which I feel I can never give up. All my hard thoughts, and narrow feelings, and ungracious speeches, I will freely confess, but we must be faithful to Christ. We must have a true Christ, the center of all our affections, the true basis of union and fellowship. In these times of much blessing there is great need of watchfulness and close walk with God. Pray for me that I may be kept. Thank the Lord He is enlarging my heart, but still telling me to walk in the narrow path. The work is going on here very blessedly in a quiet way. Conversions each night this week, except Wednesday and Thursday, at the room: on these two nights there was not gospel testimony. I think only one unconverted person in the room on one of the nights, and none on the other, but the Lord's presence was with us, and the new converts were blest.

## Extract of a Letter

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Whatever loosens the children of heaven from the soil of earth should be regarded as a blessing, however painful it may be in its operation. Born from above, we tend heavenwards whenever our new-nature instincts have their free play. God is ever true to this heaven-born nature; and if He cuts and prunes round about it at times with the keen knife of trial, it is because He is concerned for our blessing-for our heavenward progress-for our deeper enjoyment in Himself. Thus I believe the very clouds that are allowed at times to roll over our spiritual horizon are among the "all things" that are working together for our eternal good, if we are thereby stirred up to more self-judgment, more weanedness from the world, more delight in God. We are thus gainers without question by our trials, and are able to say experimentally, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." May the Lord, dear brother, if it be His will, strengthen your body and fill your soul with peace which passeth all understanding. Isa. 32:17,18.

## A Father in Heaven

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### Matthew 6

How many souls are in constant anxiety and unsettledness as to their whole path on earth, because they do not believe that they have a Father in heaven who cares for them and for every little detail in their daily walk. O if they only believed in the love of God- the real LOVE of God to them-a love which spared not His beloved Son when the sacrifice was needful for their good; if they only believed that they, in all the special circumstances of their lot on earth, were the objects of His love in heaven, what a load of anxiety and care it would remove; and what brightness it would give to their faces and to their path too. For then they would expect the guidance of a Father and their eyes would be up to Him, who most certainly never would disappoint their trust. (See 2 Chron. 16:9; Psa. 33:18.) And what would be far better than the guidance even, they would have the peace of His presence and the consciousness of His love every step of their way. This is the portion of every Christian. For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. O what a Father we have in heaven! He is such an one as to concern Himself with my little mind, and little ways, and little trials and exercises, and that too to be my helper in them all and my refuge. He is such an one as to associate His glory with all these things, so that whether I eat or drink I may do it to His glory (see, also, 1 Peter 4:11) in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the grace which He supplies. Ah! He has concerned Himself with my SINS, and these He put away by judgment of the cross. Me He has brought nigh by the same cross, or rather by the Blessed One who bore it for me, and who now lives to care for me and bless me, and even to make intercession for me as often as my failings or necessities require it. He can put in a good word for me when I can only hide my face. What a fellowship of love and interest this reveals between the Father and the Son of which we, in all the littleness of our interests, are the objects; for, O wondrous grace, these are all bound up with the ends and interests of heaven. But, in truth, when a soul has the glory of God before it as the great thing in its ways; and when the object of the heart is, that Christ may be magnified in it, whether by life or by death, it is able to reckon on God for all the means for the accomplishment of these blessed ends. It then knows that He cannot deny Himself.

I would refer any tried one about the earthly path to the sixth of Matthew, where the Lord Jesus, in the most tender and loving way, and by the most assuring declarations, seeks to put thorough confidence in God into the hearts of His disciples as to the morrow, and all that would bring care, whilst they were doing His will moment by moment. " Go, work to-day in my vineyard;" to-morrow is not mine. And verse 33 assures us that our interests and needs are God's concern and care, and will most certainly be attended to by Him whilst we are doing His present will. Our heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the air, who neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns. He thinks of them and cares for their necessities: not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father.

## Fellowship

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Fellowship being only in the light, we are never to go out of the light for any fellowship-never to leave God's presence in order to have fellowship with others. If they have fellowship with darkness-if any defilement has come over their spirit, God will purge and restore; but it is to His presence He restores. He will not admit darkness in any measure. I am to keep in His presence. There only is fellowship. There may be associations outside, but there is no fellowship. Fellowship is with the Father, our alone blessing, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And then in other words, God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. And the first essential of all holiness is to abide in Christ, in the communion of the! Father and the Son-in the light: and if another admits darkness into his soul, I am to seek that he be restored to where I am; but on no account am I to go to where he is, which will be the effort of Satan, who will try to make me appear as unloving, if I do not. "But we know that we are of God; and he that is born of God keepeth HIMSELF, and that wicked one toucheth him not." To grace be all the praise, through Him that hath loved us.

## Fragment

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Note how grace throws the virgins who all slept-not back on themselves and their failure, but forward to the coming Bridegroom. The Bridegroom cometh I Go ye out to meet Him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

## Fragments

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### Luke 8

This chapter commences by connecting the Lord's actings, in the cities and villages He went through, with His acting in the Pharisee's house; which involved the owning of worthless ones, blessed in Him, He presenting Himself as their help, and accepting of their services, as the expressions of blessing realized in Him. The three companions whose names are recorded, seem to imply, First: manifest evil in the flesh, because of seven devils in-dwelling. Second, evil connection in the world because of relationship in the flesh to the enemies of the Lord. Third, names of obscurity as to the flesh, about whom little could be gathered,-as Susanna. Such were found of Christ and blessed in Him. The devil being cast out, a new relationship is set up. The name of obscurity is brought to light, because owned of Him. All the old things are worthless and evil, but all done away in Him, and all things become new.

In this parable a new thing is introduced--nothing of the flesh is owned, but the seed is sown-the word of God.

This word is subject to three great hindrances to fruitfulness-to be trodden down-to be taken in without any depth -to be received amongst other principles, -as those of nature. Each cause of unfruitfulness soon develops itself. If trodden down, the devil takes it away. If it is not valued, it will soon be taken away. This treading down is open undervaluing, and the expression of supposed worthlessness. The devil is seen in this by Him, who knows the mysteries of these things. Many do not know them.

If it be received without sustaining power, the time of temptation will be the time of falling away. The temptation is not the cause, but the absence of power to preserve the word in growth under circumstances that would blight it. Blessed are they that endure the trial. If the trial is against the word, there is that within to sustain in it.

If the word is received amongst principles of nature, to let all grow up together,-cares, riches, and pleasures of this life,-the result will be that the word will be choked. In the preceding case there was the absence of that which would sustain in the lack of moisture-in this the presence of what would choke, cares, &c., and no fruit is brought to perfection. But blessed are they who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. The thing of value with such is the word. The devil cannot take it away, because it is not slighted. The hour of temptation is endured, because of its known blessedness, above and beyond all trial in the flesh. The things of the flesh cannot choke it, because the unholy association between it and them is not allowed. Such have their trials, but they are sustained in patience. If there are trials still fruitfulness is there, because of the deep abiding of the living nurtured word. And if cares, riches, and pleasures of this life come in competition, they are of the flesh, and such can be mortified; but the word is held in the Spirit, and is this paramount to them all, because of the power of God..

The intelligence of these mysteries is given to discipleship--blindness about them and want of intelligence is the state of others.

You find men maintaining philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Such is not the labor of discipleship, and therefore beware of such. The faithful laborer will sow the seed; and the seed is the word of God.

The obedient ear and heart will hear the word and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. " As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in • him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

#### Fragments

"He that gathereth not with me scattereth."

There may be gathering, as we see, in looking round at what is called the church; but if it is not WITH Christ, the whole thing, vast as it is, is but scattering. One may be very ignorant about Christ, but it must be Himself around whom we gather.

But, on the other side, so sectarian are our hearts, that we have need to watch, lest, when Christ is owned as the center, we be like the disciples, who said, " we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us." Here self had sprung up; for the man whom they forbad was glorifying God in casting out devils in Christ's name. There is no possibility of detecting the subtlety of self, except as Christ is the center of the soul. And it is certain that Christ will not be the center of my efforts if He is not the center of my thoughts. And it is equally certain that I shall not make Christ the center of all around me, if he is not practically the center of my own heart.

It is a great thing for a man to say, I have no object but Christ; that He is everything to me. And everything in me is so judged by this one object, that the whole activity of my heart is for Christ, and only for Christ. It is not enough to have Christ only at bottom as our object--every Christian has that; for if Christ be not at the bottom of the heart, the man is no Christian at all.

The truth is simply this, that between Christ, who is the root at the bottom of the heart, and that which comes out, there are ordinarily a great quantity of middle things that are not judged, and which certainly are not Christ, nor like Christ; for only touch them, and nature is directly up in arms. Besides love to Christ, there is often love of money, love of worldly company, love of power, love of influence, under the pretext of using it for Christ: all of which, if unjudged, must hinder communion, and will prevent Christ being the simple and only object and center of the soul.

There is nothing that the hearts of God's children should more sedulously cultivate than the thought that we have to do with God. " Jesus has suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It is with God " we have to do," And if this truth be not practically maintained in the soul, our strength will be weakness, our walk our disgrace, and our worship but form.

This is the thought we are to cherish, that through redemption " we are brought nigh to God," " we have to do with God."

I need hardly say that in every age the whole power and blessing to man has arisen from his having to do with God. God is the source of all life and blessing. But the way in which the displays of God's presence, and power, and help are manifested, are modified by the relations in which He is manifesting Himself to His people, and according to His purposes in dealing with His people.

In a former dispensation, and in the present, there is a contrast in the mode in which God's presence and power are manifested. God's presence with Israel was for a manifestation of His power and goodness upon earth before the nations, and hence the discomfiture of outward enemies, and the enjoyment of earthly blessings. In the church God's presence is for the manifestations of His power in sustaining upon heavenly principles a people whom He has gathered to Himself. And hence His power will be mainly displayed to faith, in the victory over spiritual enemies in a triumph over the world, and in the enjoyment of spiritual blessings.

Fragments

2 Samuel 22

It is evident here, while the occasion was David's deliverances from Saul, yet the Spirit who spoke by the mouth of David goes far beyond the circumstances of David, and brings in Christ; therefore seeing what it is the Spirit speaks of here, it draws our attention to the position Christ took, and what the circumstances of His death and resurrection were, and what His deliverances out of them. Christ came down into the very depth of the ruin in which His people were lying. And such were the intolerant abounding of iniquity, that they had assumed the character of a rod upon Christ, when the cry of Christ brought out God in the fullest power of deliverance. When God came out of His place, He delivered Christ and set Him at His right hand. And here I would notice that God did come out of His place: for it was impossible for Him to keep in His place any longer. God rode upon the Cherubim. The Cherub here marks the circumstances of that throne of God in judgment, as the Cherub kept the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. When He rides on the Cherub, He comes to judge everything evil. God could no longer keep His place, for He could no longer leave His blessed One to the consequences attendant on iniquity. The Cherub that kept man out of Eden now brought God in. Mark the extent of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, for He was subject to the whole power of evil and man's wretchedness. The sorrows of death compassed Him about, the pains of hell gat hold on Him, and it was out of these deep waters God drew Him when He raised Him from the dead. The darkness and power of Satan was not in the least relieved by the coming in of God. The sanction of God's judgment was upon it. Yes, the power of darkness in His soul had the sanction of God's judgment upon it, and why? Because of our sins, and then see the place in which He sets us. God comes out of His place intolerant when iniquity is at its height. All men acted on by Satan rising up against God's Son, God must therefore come out of His place to relieve His Son. He comes forth unable to hear the great power of wickedness any longer. He comes out as the destroying angel, intolerant because of the great power of evil. But if God rides upon the Cherub that guards the tree of life, where shall any appear? But, blessed be God, when He comes in glorious power, when He rides upon the Cherubim to execute judgment, He finds His people under the protection of the blood. When the destroying angel went forth in the land of Egypt, the blood was upon the doorposts of Israel's houses before He came out, and therefore when God came out to judge, He found Israel -under the protection of His righteousness, for God must have judged Israel when He did the Egyptians, if the blood had not been there; but God said,

"when I see the blood, I will pass over." Therefore the blood being upon the door-posts, Israel was perfectly safe, in virtue of the holiness of that judgment which was going forth to destroy the Egyptians. And here mark the reality of the place in which Jesus put Himself for 'us; for if Jesus had not been under the wrath for our sins, when God came out of His place and rode upon the Cherubim, we must be judged there and then. But when the bitter cry of Jesus upon the cross (for us) entered into the ear of God, He had then drained the cup to the very last dreg for us, that our souls might find safety, and not only safety, but that when God came out of His place, riding upon the Cherubim, intolerant of the evil which He could no longer bear, our souls might rejoice in the power of that holiness which had made Christ " SIN FOR US."

Consider, then, the reality of the sufferings Christ endured for us-going down into the very depths of sin, and under all the power of evil that Satan himself was master of: and then think of what a character our sins must be to call for such judgment as this, for it was truly a RIGHTEOUS judgment.

The possibility of God ever standing before him otherwise than as an exactor cannot enter into the heart of a well-instructed Papist; the moment, therefore, he sees God's love towards him in having Himself provided the sacrifice His own holiness needed; and that the sacrifice has been offered and continues its efficacy unto this very moment; and that there remaineth no more offering for sin, because that by the will of God those who believe are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, he is set free. He can come near to God in full assurance of faith.

Now everything is slipping from its place. Everything that is not founded on Christ and His word, and to the exclusion of everything else, will soon be in the enemy's camp. Take with you a single eye, and your whole body will be full of light; otherwise you will slip away into the dominion of evil, and at last of Satan. Do not be deceived by the name of religion. The weak, the crucified One, is the power of God unto salvation. It is matter of faith and of holding fast. Disbelieve the false prophets. Believe God, and the devil will flee from you, and you will be left to the rejoicing of hope, and rest will be recompensed to you when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

We ought to know that this is a time when allegiance to the Lord Jesus will be put to the test.

#### Fragments

Note how the moment one's heart has got resurrection as a home, all mere earthly ties and associations lose their hold. We are freed so as to walk with God in the consciousness of the love of Christ wherever He leads. And then it is a small thing where the body lies, if our friends or ourselves should die, though our dust is precious in His sight. Heaven is our home, and our gathering together is unto Him.

The Shepherd sought His sheep from the earnest care of His own heart for it.

As Jesus came from God and went to God, so does the Book that divinely reveals Him come from and elevate to -Him. If received, it has brought the soul to God; for He has revealed Himself in it.

Holiness is not merely separation from evil, but separation to God from evil. The new nature has not merely a nature or intrinsic character, as being of God; it has an object, for it cannot live on itself-a positive object, and that is God. Now this changes everything; because it separates from

evil, which it abhors therefore when it sees it, because it is filled with good. We are occupied with good, and hence holy, for that is holiness; and therefore easily and discerningly abhorrent of evil, without occupying ourselves with it. Sanctification is resting (by the enlightening of the Holy Ghost) on an object which by its nature purifies the affections by being their object.

We cannot walk out of darkness but by walking in the light, that is, with God; and God is love, and were He not, we could not walk there.

The Lord knows how to deliver the godly, and to reserve the unjust for judgment: till then! patience and godliness.

We have to pass through the wilderness as belonging to God. Separated to God as sons in the midst of this evil age, we have God's rest set before us; we rest in the atmosphere of death, when we rest anywhere else.

Present failure unfits for present sympathy with God and His people; and present sympathy with God and His people preserves from individual failure.

## Galilee and Bethany

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There were two distinct parties of women, which severally had communion with the Lord Jesus, but who are never seen in communion with each other. The character of their relationship to Him differed very much-though they were entirely one in the common love of His person, and in the zeal that would serve Him earnestly.

I allude to the Galilean women, and the sisters at Bethany.

The Galilean women were with the Lord in the scenes of His ordinary activities. They had not much knowledge of Him, but they loved Him dearly. When we are first introduced to them, we see them serving and following Him. (Luke 8) And at the end we find them still with Him and serving Him, having followed Him from the distant north to Jerusalem, when He went there for the last time. And there we find them after His death and resurrection; and waiting also, as for His promise, after He had left them for the heavens. (Mark 16:1; Acts 1:14.)

The sisters at Bethany were not commonly with Him; but what they wanted in familiarity was more than made up to them in intimacy. With less intercourse, they had more knowledge. When we are first introduced to them, we see them learning as well as serving-and not following Him, but receiving Him into their house. (Luke 10) And in a further scene of their history, we see them still learning lessons on the secrets and glories that belonged to Him. (John 11, 12.)

Here are characteristic differences between these two families, as I may call them-though each of them precious to the Lord, and precious in the recollections of the saints. Those of Galilee were serving and following Him-those of Bethany were learning of Him, and receiving Him. He accepted services from the one, and with all confidence gave Himself to their company; but He was at home with the other.

But I would pause here for a little.

There is a great deal for faith to do in such a scene as this world, and in such circumstances as human life furnishes every day. It has to reach its own world through many veils, and to dwell there in spite of many hindrances. It is "the things not seen" and "the things hoped for" that faith deals with: and such things lie at a distance, or under cover; and faith has therefore to reach them through veils, and beyond intervals.

In John 11 we look on a scene of death. Every eye there, but one, saw nothing else. The disciples, Martha, and her friends, and even Mary, were full of thoughts of it. But Jesus, in the midst of all this, eyed life and talked of life. He moved onward through the scene, in the consciousness of it. He carried light through the darkness that was overspreading that hour.

The end, however, instructs them all. It lets the sisters at Bethany know that Jesus was "the life," and that under His hand there is resurrection from the dead. Lazarus their brother comes forth at the voice of the Son of God.

And then, having learned this lesson, this secret among the glories of Christ, they enjoy it. It was learned, as it ever is when learned from God, to be used and enjoyed-poorly indeed by some of us; but so we own it, that we are to use in living, practical virtue in our souls, that which we have received as a divine lesson. And thus, as a family in the light of resurrection, Lazarus and Martha and Mary are seen in the Lord's company, serving, sitting, worshipping. They either wait on Him, listen to Him, or make their offerings to Him. (John 12:1.)

And in all this, we see a very advanced character, as I may observe. Martha, though still serving, as in Luke 10 does not complain of her sister, as she did there. Mary, still at His feet, is there, not listening to some more elementary lessons, as we may say she was doing in Luke 10, but in worship-filling the house with the odor of the ointment, greeting Him as with the honors that were to be His in His place of victory over death and the grave. And Lazarus, not seen before save in the grave, now taking an honored place at the table with his Lord, as one seated in heavenly places, a witness of resurrection from the dead.

Here, indeed, is Bethany. Light in the knowledge of the glory of Christ fills this dwelling there.

And this light separates them. They are not seen, after this, at the empty sepulcher, with the women from Galilee. Magdalene and her companions are there, to learn certain lessons about the glories of the common Lord, which these sisters had thus learned already.

Faith acts on the instruction it receives as well as enjoys it. If the sisters enjoyed at the supper-table in John 12 the lesson they had learned at their brother's grave in John 11, they act on the instruction in John 20, by not being at the sepulcher of Jesus with Mary of Galilee. They could not go to seek the body of Jesus, since they had already received at the hand of Jesus the body, the raised body, of their lately dead brother. The grave, they knew, could not hold Him who had already bidden it to give up their brother. His own sepulcher must surely be empty, since He had Himself already emptied the sepulcher of a poor sinner whom He loved. They cannot, therefore, go to the garden, and look for the body of Jesus. Love would have had them there, but faith kept them away. Their thoughts had been regulated according to the light and mysteries of God; and they could not seek the living among the dead. This would have been surrendering the truth they had already learned; and well did they know from whom they had learned it. It would be worse than the disciples forgetting the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and how many baskets of fragments they had taken up. A brother had been restored to life-something more even than a multitude fed in a wilderness.

But further. Having learned this lesson, Bethany was the place which the Lord sought, when Israel had fully, finally, and formally rejected Him. See Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:11.

In this way, or at such a moment, Bethany was a kind of heaven to Him. He retired to it, when the earth, represented by the Jew or in the Jew, had refused Him.

They were, as I may say, a kind of Kenite family in the midst of the Israel of the Evangelists, the disciples of the Lord Jesus in the day of His sojourn here. They were separated; not however from any unsocial or self-righteous temper, but from a peculiar order of Naziritism or sanctification arising from the light which they had in the knowledge of the glory of Christ.

But I must add this, that though these two companies of women are thus distinguished, and actually kept asunder all through their Christian walk, yet are they essentially, eternally- one. And sweet indeed it is to know their real, intrinsic, personal oneness, in the very face of this temporary, present, and necessary separation.

There was nothing of a moral character in this separation. It arose, as we have now seen, from different measures of knowledge, from a different character of relationship to the Lord, or of communion with Him. It does not cause any uneasiness or pain, when we think of it. Other separations among the saints of God, which we see in Scripture, arose from something moral, and it is humbling and painful to look at them. But this is not of that class.

The separation between Abraham and Lot, unlike this of the Galilean women, and the women of Bethany, was moral. It was the love of the world that did that mischief. Lot eyed with desire the well-watered plains of Sodom; and there he dwelt in the midst of a people that were sinners before the Lord continually, while Abraham was sojourning where best he might find a place to pitch his tent in. And the breach was never healed in this world. He who looked towards Sodom sinks at last behind the still more distant mountains of Moab ingloriously, leaving another pillar of salt to warn us all of what may be the sad issue of learning not to be content with such things as we have.

It was much the same in the case of Elijah and Obadiah. The stranger who had denounced and left the kingdom of Ahab, could scarcely admit of companionship with him who was still a chief officer there. But these two did meet on a very solemn, striking occasion; and Obadiah, Ahab's officer, sought, all he could, to reconcile Elijah, and to share the privilege of communion with that man who walked as a stranger to the corruptions around him. But it would not do. Elijah could not admit this. The world had already separated these men of God, and nothing but the victory that overcometh the world could put them together again. The efforts of an uneasy mind are not allowed to succeed. (See 1 Kings 18:1-16.)

In apostolic days there was another separation: I mean between Barnabas' and Paul. The cause of it was moral but not of so sad and humbling a kind. It was not the well-watered plains of Sodom, nor the palace of King Ahab that threw up the partition-wall in this case. It was not the world, but natural affection, the strength or claim of human relationship unduly admitted in the midst of the service of Christ. Barnabas would fain take his sister's son to the work; Paul judged his fitness to be in it not by nature or relationship, but by Christ; and they walked no more together. (Acts 15)

In the case of these two companies of christian women, which I am now considering, we see not this painful, humbling, moral secret. It was neither the love of the world, nor the undue force of natural partialities, that are called to account for the distance between them, and for the fact that they are never seen together. It was different measures of light in the knowledge of the Lord, and a different character of relationship to Him, as I may say, accordingly.

They did not combine, and yet I will answer for it, they loved each other. But Galilee was not Bethany; Mary Magdalene was not a sister of Lazarus. And though Martha and Mary would have delighted personally to company with her, they could not go with her to the sepulcher.

But, I must ask this, Did Bethany take no interest in Galilee? When it was told the house of Lazarus what had passed between the risen Lord and the Galilean women, was that household unmoved by the tidings? Did Mary and her sister grudge Magdalene, because she had been the

more active one, and had the joy and service committed to her of bearing the good tidings of the resurrection back to the city, to Peter, to John, and to others? Let our common christian sympathies and charities answer these questions. One thing I know and am assured of, we ought to be able to answer them. And it is this ability we all of us want more abundantly-ability in the Spirit to rise above the jealousies and self-seekings which nature inspires. I believe the family at Bethany had it, and I believe we all need to cultivate it.

I would, however, add this, that the ignorance about the resurrection which the Galilean women betrayed was not an unguilty ignorance. The Lord had often rebuked His disciples in earlier days, while He was yet with them, for their not knowing the Scriptures. And now the angel says to them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" It was therefore a rebukable condition of heart, which brought them to the sepulcher, and thus separated them from their sisters of Bethany, though, as we said before, the secret of this separation was not of that moral character which kept Abraham and Lot, or Elijah and Obadiah, apart.

O the various lessons which the soul may gather from God's most perfect Word!

## God Revealing Himself

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### Genesis 17

There were several distinct ways in which God revealed Himself to Abraham, as Almighty, as Jehovah, &c. Again it is said, "The word of the Lord came to Abraham," giving him a certain prophetic revelation of something future. But in this chapter He revealed Himself in a new character and in a certain sense in a more important one, viz., as God Himself. It is what God is. That gives it an immense character and of great import to our souls. Because if we have not come to God there will always be a question in the conscience. If I have not come to God how can I tell what He will be to me when I do come, for I have certainly to come to Him. If my conscience is not perfect for God all will have to be settled over again. So when God had not done the work which perfects the conscience He did not reveal Himself. He dwelt in the thick darkness. But now in Christ the conscience is perfected, that we may be able to stand before Him when His whole character is revealed.

There are a multitude of blessings given when we are brought into relationship, and exercises in which the soul is perfected with God. But these suppose relationship as existing. This one great question must be first settled, Can I stand before God at all? If the exercises go on before it is settled, before I have been with God, there never will be peace. But when I have been before Him there is peace; and that is what faith does. Then it is a question of communion. God Himself can come and talk with' us, as here He does with Abraham. True, Abraham was on His face before God, but he was there.

This is the character of the book of Hebrews. Can I go into the Holiest? Not, can I walk down here-not what is the state of my affections-but can I go into the Holiest without raising a question in God's nature or in my conscience?

It is God here, not Jehovah. The very substance of this chapter is that we have to be with God. But, first, we have to stand each man for himself before God-in Christ of course. But how can. I have communion with a person to whom I cannot come? There may be hopes and fears, but no communion. It is a blessed thing to be so perfectly brought to God as that He can talk with us without raising one question in our conscience.

I will turn a little now to the privileges we get when set in this place. They are here alluded to in the covenant of circumcision, that is, the whole arrangement of God's purposes in connection with Abraham as head of a new race.

But, first, I would remark that it is no Adam-race. The Adam-race had its place and standing as turned out from God. We forget it too often. If I look at myself as a child of Adam, I may say, are not you to be judged? Yes, of course I am. Then you are to be condemned. There is no judgment at all without condemnation. " Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Settle it well in your minds, that there is no judgment without condemnation. If God were to judge Adam when innocent, He would judge His own work. But when Adam sinned

then it was God had to judge him. We turn God into a judge by sinning, and so necessarily judgment is condemnation. God does put man under law just to bring that judgment into his conscience. We have to get this thoroughly into our minds, that there is no judgment apart from condemnation.

Here I find what led me to that: Abraham set up as the head of a new race. Of course it was through grace, but it is not Adam-seed, but Abraham-seed.

The world, after the flood, had become settled in "nations and peoples and tongues." God called Abraham to leave it all. "Get thee out of thy country, unto a land that I will skew thee." God was in effect saying to him, I am doing an entirely new thing- I am going to have a people for myself. Believers answer to this now. This brings out in full definite distinctness, that God called out of the very system which He Himself had set up, but which had departed from Him. It is the mark of the character of faith all through. Whereas Adam's race is a convicted, condemned race, Abraham's is a called race. Thus we get the coming in of God into the very scene of judgment, and taking men out of it.

Now mark the consequence. God sets about blessing them in His own way. It is not putting them on conduct or responsibility, but it is God going to shew how He blesses people. It is through the church that He is teaching angels this. When the angels see the thief on the cross, Mary Magdalene, Paul, you and me, in the same glory in which Christ is, then they will see the way in which God blesses. It is the setting up by God of an entirely new thing of which He is the origin. There were faithful persons before Abel, but they were never called out of a judged world. Now He sets them as His family.

Mark another thing. Having called this people out, He has made us the depositaries of His blessing after His own heart. It is a great thing to be the very expression of the way in which God blesses and shows the exceeding riches of His grace. Is it in a stone that God does this? in a heart that does not feel? It is in a heart that knows God. It is the possession of the love of God, which is His nature, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." We dwell in Him, and He in us.

Now mark the consequence. That is the character of our blessing, but it is the witness of it as well. (I need not say it is grace.) I am in it, and it flows out. That is the other divine thing. We have all the blessedness that is in God; and that becomes a river in us to those who have it not. It is Christ Himself, all and in all. There is the place where the Christian is set. I get turned now from the face of being able to stand before God to the enjoyment of God, so as to be the expression of this in my words and ways. Alas! it is hindered. There are plenty of things to be corrected that we may enjoy it more; but it is where we are. What a difference between this and going on with the world, so as not to know if we are saved!

This chapter is higher up than the 15th; but in the 15th we get the ground of it. He does not say here, I am thy God; but, "I am the Almighty God." It is the proper revelation of Himself. In the 15th chapter, "he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." God can now talk with him. That is the way all these particular relationships have place. They are founded on this, "it was counted to him for righteousness." They are all founded on His estimate of righteousness; for who was counting? "HE counted it to him for righteousness." I may ask a person, Is your heart

happy in Christ, or are you going on with the world? But that is quite another thing from asking, Is your conscience perfect before God, so that you can stand before Him? It is a terrible thing to have my ways to be settled at the day of judgment. People say they hope to get off then; but all that is from their counting righteousness. Here I get God's counting. It was counted to Him, not by him. We have God Himself counting the thing, and bringing it to him. What does He count? Is it human righteousness? No. He has counted that, and condemned it. It is divine righteousness that He is counting. That sets me on a ground on which I can have communion with God. "We joy in God." You cannot talk of enjoying God if there is a fear of judgment. A prisoner cannot talk of enjoying his judge. I must get God's righteousness. God reckons every believer divinely righteous. We are "made the very righteousness of God in him."

In this chapter it is God. It is God Himself, taken as God, in His own holiness. I can talk with Him, on my face it is true, but still I can have communion with Him. The heart is perfectly free in God's presence because God had made it free. God has counted Christ to me for righteousness, and He has told me so. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest." When we come to the details we see how-in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein is my faith. God has proved His righteousness in accepting me, in making me righteous. How do I know that God is righteous? In His having set Christ at His own right hand, because He has put away all our sins. I see it in the reward given to Christ Himself because He has put away all my sins.

In chap. 17 Abraham receives the seal of the faith which he had in chap. 15. "He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." Circumcision was the seal to him; the Holy Ghost is to us, the seal of faith. In Rom. 4 he is presented as Father of all that believe, head of this new race, just as Adam was head of the sinful race.

What a sense the Apostle Paul had of the blessing he had in God, how he felt himself to be a blessing! He says to Agrippa, "I would to God that not only thou but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as am, except these bonds." What fullness of meaning in that "as I am!" He had that consciousness of His own blessedness that he could not wish them a better thing than to be as he was. "And not Agrippa alone, but all that hear me this day." What a partaking of the divine nature! As it is said in Ephesians, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." If a creature has got God, he has got what is infinite, though he himself is finite. The best wish I could wish a person is to be a Christian.

We do well to remember distinctly these three points: first, that it is not the responsibility of a ruined Adam-race, but that it is the calling of God, starting all from Himself as a new source and origin; second, this calling is to such an enjoyment of blessing as that we are to be a pattern and model of blessing to angels; third, that which puts us in present relationship with God so as to enjoy it, as "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." All is founded on divine righteousness. It is not the reckoning of conscience, but God's reckoning it to those that believe in Jesus. I can stand in His presence now, and have communion with Him. David could go and sit before God and say, "Is this the manner of man?" No: it is the manner of God. Thus He gives the capacity in righteousness for free happy, blessed intercourse with Himself: He says, You are my children, and I am your Father. It is a people called out of this world. "Get thee out of thy country." O, what a different thing from dragging on, uncertain how it will end, or having no taste for fellowship with the Father-no sense of what Christ has spent His life for, that we might have the

enjoyment of it.

The Lord give us to be vigilant and diligent, and to remember His presence where only we can enjoy it.-Brief Notes of a Lecture.

## God's Care

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The Lord will keep His own:  
Yes, when the clouds increase,  
And the last light has flown,  
His care will never cease.  
This I'm persuaded's true,  
That not the darkest night,  
That not the dreariest view,  
Will check His oversight.  
Rather His care will grow  
For His who wander here  
The more their path below  
Grows dangerous and drear.  
For God will never let  
The greedy darkness win  
What He doth estimate,  
That hopes His mercy in.  
And dangers terrible  
Alike must strive in vain  
Against His flock-think well,  
He's God, His power is plain.  
For me, I'll raise my head;  
To Him my song I'll raise,  
And fearless I will tread  
The darkness of time's ways.  
And this shall be my song:  
I am a stranger here,

A weakling 'mid the strong,  
Wand'ring in lands austere.  
The night would me deceive,  
The darkness swallow soon;  
The strong my death-blow give,  
They give no other boon.  
But God is with me here,  
His care is over me,  
To him my safety's dear,  
My guardian died for me.  
I am of price to Him,  
Though my own nature's vile;  
Brighter than seraphim,  
On me there rests His smile.  
From Christ my worth I draw,  
By His blood turned to gold;  
I'm kept in safety for  
The crown which He doth hold.  
I shall be worn by Him,  
Help grace His snowy brow -  
O bliss! And I so dim,  
So seeming worthless now.  
Thou hollow world and dark!  
I am no child of thine;  
In tee I toil - but hark!  
I have a home of mine.  
And I shall soon be claimed  
By Him who died for me,  
Whose hand my home has framed

In God's eternity.

## God's Great Ordinance

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We may have observed in John's Gospel the zealous and decided way in which the Lord Jesus sets aside all honor which man might bring to Him, in order that He may establish the grace of God, or the love of the Father, to poor sinners. In that Gospel, He shines in the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, as full of grace; and He will not shine in any other glory. Men may propose to honor Him as a Teacher of heavenly secrets, as a Doer of wonders, as One suited to be great in the world, as a Judge or as a King; but He sets all aside with marked and indignant earnestness, and will be received only as the witness of the Father, the minister of grace to sinners.

This gives character to the Lord's way in the Gospel by John.

In a corresponding way, we may see how zealously, so to speak, all through Scripture, God sets aside all that would stand as in company with Christ to share His place with Him, (and, still more, all that would dare or affect to displace Him,) that He may fix and I establish Him as His one great ordinance.

There is, let me say, a very blessed correspondency between these two things. In John's Gospel, or during His ministry here among us, Christ the Son is zealous in hiding Himself, that the grace of God, the secret of the bosom of the Father, may appear: and God, at all times, during the different dispensations, is zealous that CHRIST, and CHRIST ONLY, should be accepted and honored as His own one great ordinance.

Of this latter truth, I would notice some striking pledges and witnesses, as we pass down the current of Scripture.

Nadab and Abihu, with bold and infidel daring, set aside the fire which had come down from heaven. That fire, symbolically, expressed the acceptance of the services of Aaron, and was, in this way, the seal which God was putting upon Christ and His work; for He is the true Aaron and the true Victim, the Priest and the Sacrifice for God.

The hand of God awfully and peremptorily judges this sin, by slaying them on the spot. Penal fire avenged the strange fire which had displaced the fire which had borne witness to Christ. This is full of meaning. (See Lev. 10)

Moses and Aaron exposed themselves in like manner, though not indeed in like measure. They trespassed against the Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. It was not in the spirit of infidel daring, like Nadab and Abihu. No indeed. Far otherwise. It was, through sudden temptation, under the provoking of the people. But still they did dishonor God's great ordinance at the water of Meribah. They did not sanctify God in using the rod with the Rock, according to the divine word. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. He trespassed against the Rock which followed Israel, and that Rock was Christ; and that is enough. He and Aaron are judged for this sin. They are told that they shall not bring the people into the land -a judgment which is never

repented of. God is not to be moved from avenging the wrongs of Christ upon His choicest servants, be they who they may, even a Moses and an Aaron. The judgment was pronounced on the spot, and maintained till it was executed to the -very letter. There was a great moral distance, I know, and, as I have already said, between the offense of Nadab and his brother, and that of Moses and his brother. The haste and unadvisedness of the latter are surely not to be condemned, as the bold, infidel insult of the former. But still, God avenged the controversy of Christ upon each and all of them. (See Num. 20). When we come to New Testament times, we find the same jealousy touching the honors of the Christ in the mind of God. In ignorance, as not knowing what he said, or not knowing any better, Peter, on the holy hill, proposed to give equal place to Moses, Elias, and Jesus. But "the excellent glory" could not be silent then. The honor of Christ is not to suffer at the hand of any one. It may be but ignorance, and not unadvisedness, as with Moses; or infidel presumption, as with Nadab-it may be neither scorn nor temper, but only from want of knowing better. Still, God's hand or God's voice will be ready to avenge the dishonor of His Christ. The voice from the excellent glory lets Peter know that " the Beloved Son" alone is to be heard. (See Luke 9)

Then, what God thus, by hand or voice, began to do in this matter, the Spirit in His vessels continues to do. God in the excellent glory, the Holy Ghost in His vessels, and, I may add, every saint, are one in this zeal and jealousy.

The disciples of John Baptist were somewhat moved by the multitude seeming to pass by their master for the younger Jesus. They resent this-as Joshua, ages before, had done in the cause of his master Moses, when Eldad and Medad began their prophesying. But John, in all gentleness, and yet in all decisiveness, answers this. As in the name of all the prophets, as standing at the end of the line of them, and uttering their mind, he hides himself, that Christ alone may be seen and heard. " A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above"- " He must increase, I decrease," he says, replying to the words of His disciples. Though but a vessel of the Spirit, though but an Elias, he speaks the language of the excellent glory on the holy hill. The voice of God there called away Moses and the prophets from the eye and from the ear of Peter; so here, John's word withdraws himself and all his fellow-servants, the Bridegroom's friends, from the eye and ear of his disciples, (and indeed from all beside,) that the same " Beloved Son" may alone be known Or thought of. " John" and " the excellent glory" have, in this way, the same mind about Jesus the Christ, God's great ordinance. (See John 3) This is all consistent, and all blessed. The glory as on high, and the Spirit in His vessels here, are agreeing together to give all honor to the Son.

After John, we listen to the epistles; each of them, in its way, does this same service. It is jealous over Christ, careful to maintain His place and honors for Him alone. But in that to the Hebrews, we see this purpose prevailing in the mind of the Spirit throughout; I may say, it gives its character to that epistle.

That epistle is a setting aside one thing after another, in order to leave the Lord Jesus, the Christ, God's great ordinance, only before us; and having brought him in, to keep Him there; and each thing, as it comes up, is set aside with a strong, decided hand, as in ancient days, the days of Nadab and Abihu, or of Moses and Aaron.

Angels are first withdrawn from our sight, and He, who has obtained a more excellent name than they, is brought in; and this, too, upon the authority of scripture after scripture. (Chapter 1;2)

Moses is then set aside, as but a servant in the house of another, and He, Jesus the Christ, the Son, is brought in as lord over His own house. (Chapter 3)

Joshua is to give place, as one who gave Israel no rest, while Jesus, the true Joshua, is revealed as giving God's own rest to us. (Chapter 4)

Aaron, the priest, is then shown as yielding to Christ, the true Melchisedek, the Priest in the power of an endless life. (Chapter 5-7)

The old covenant vanishes before that covenant of which Christ is the Mediator, and which abides now forever. (Chapter 8)

The sanctuary under the law is taken down, and the better and more perfect one, where Christ serves, is raised in the stead of it. (Chapter 9)

The victim provided for the altar by the law is slain no more, and the one sacrifice of Christ is established in its efficacy forever. (Chapter 10)

Thus, God's great ordinance is set in its place. Christ is brought in, and all, one after another, have to go out. Angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, the old covenant, the first tabernacle, the legal sacrifices, are made to leave the scene, that He and He alone may fill it, and being brought in, after this manner, by the Spirit, Christ is set before us forever-as we read just at the end of the epistle, " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

All is thus in earnest and consistent jealousy around Jesus, from first to last. The hand of God avenging, the voice of the Father rebuking, the Spirit in His living vessels or in His written oracles renouncing, all slight upon Him, the Christ of God, God's one great ordinance.

And what has thus been done by the divine hand and voice, and by the Holy Ghost in His authorized authoritative ministers, is still done, and that every day and all the earth over, by all elect, and ransomed sinners. The faith of the saint is one, with all beside, in this jealousy.

Paul, as a saint, will say, as Paul, as an inspired teacher, will teach, " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, " Christ is all." John will say, with intense jealousy watching over the name of Jesus, " if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." This jealousy touching Him, this glorying only in Him, is the common instinctive property of every renewed mind, the inwrought, and thus, indeed, the natural sense and judgment of every saved soul.

What harmonies are these! Harmonies of heaven and of earth, of all times and dispensations, of the excellent glory and of poor earthen vessels! And the harmonies that utter the song or form the music, take for their subject a theme of loftiest conception, and of most precious and joyous meaning-the glory and worth of the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, who is to know no one to emulate Him throughout the eternal ages.

## God's Love

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In Rom. 5, after the first few verses, we have two points most blessedly brought out; the first is the nature of the love of God, and the second the sort of deliverance it works out for its objects. The former we have in verses 6-8, pursued in verses 9-11 to its happy result in our joying in God; the latter in the remaining part of the chapter. It is on the former that I would now dwell for a little.

" The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Well, but what love? A love to good people, to those who love Him? O no, not that by any means. Not that it fails of this result, as we have already seen, for " we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." But before ever we joyed in God, or had one pulse of affection beating in our hearts towards Him, He loved us. When our hearts were cold as the nether millstone, His heart yearned with love over us. " When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This was the fruit of God's love. He loved ungodly persons, who had no power to be anything else; and loved them so much as to give His "own Son, out of His bosom, of His own free accord, to stand in their stead, and to suffer their deserts, that righteousness might have its way on Him the Holy One in their stead, and that love might have its way on them and towards them in bringing them back through this wondrous reconciliation into its own everlasting embrace.

This precious truth is presented to us in these verses by way of contrast with 44 the manner of man." Man needs something in the object to move him to love; he would scarcely die for a miser, let him be ever so just-there would be no motive; but for a benevolent man some would even dare to die. But who would die for his enemy? But that is precisely what Jesus did for us. It is when we were enemies that the Son of God died for us. Nay, more, it is by this wondrous fact that God is commending His love to us. " God commendeth HIS love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, (and sin is the expression of enmity-see Col. 1) Christ died for us." Christ died for us before ever we were reconciled; for it is by His death that we are reconciled. He died for us when we were nothing but ungodly ones, sinners, and enemies. That is indeed love. No motive in the sinner-it found all its motives in itself. This is the love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. It begins in God. It is the activity of God on the behalf of those who are active only in evil, and who say in their hearts, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. But it will not depart, for it must make these very enemies know its wondrous ways. Love does for them what love sees they need, and all of its own accord; yea more, love does for them what only love could imagine: it sacrifices itself that it may save them, and have them with it to enjoy it forever. But first of all, it gives them a place in its heart. This God does, for He is love; and this He does for sinners. This is the first grand thing: before any work is done in them, before any work is done for them even, God LOVES them. The gift of Jesus for them whilst they are yet sinners is the demonstration of this love. Righteousness demanded their death, love provides a ransom. Righteousness could not receive them in their sins; love dies to put them away. And after love has accomplished its work on their behalf, it comes to tell of it and to win their hearts by this revelation of itself. And this it does; for when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. He hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.

Having established this point, the Apostle goes on to expatiate on the confidence we may have in such love as to all the rest. Everything that love can do for its friends we may now reckon on from what it has already done for its enemies. Every further manifestation of love lies imbedded in this first One, and if we have rightly estimated it we can count on all the rest. " He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up freely to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." " If we have been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." He is our strength and song, for He has become our salvation. The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.

## God's Mercy Revealing and Meeting Man's Misery

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"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."-Acts 26:15-18.

Many an estimate may be formed of the ruin which sin has brought upon man; but the only real gauge of his misery is presented in the mercy by which, on the part of God, that misery is remedied. In this picture of man's condition, presented in the words of Christ's commission to Paul, there are no hard words of condemnation, nor threats of hell and judgment, nor exaggerated descriptions of present corruption or of future sorrow, but only the calm, heaven-pronounced declaration of a sinner's moral distance from God. But in this how does feature after feature of his moral ruin start into view, as the words in succession fall from the lips of his deliverer, while He tells of the varied application of His blood-bought cure! "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," was the gracious answer to His fallen persecutor, as, trembling and confounded, he asked the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the commission follows, by which Saul of Tarsus is empowered to tell, as wide as the world, of the mercy which grace has provided to meet a sinner's need. "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes; to turn them from darkness to light; from-the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive the forgiveness of sins; and inheritance among them which are sanctified." Blindness - darkness -Satan's power-distance from God - sins unforgiven - portionless as to eternity - no meetness for heaven--no fitness to dwell in the holiness of God's eternal presence; these are the sad features of man's condition, as a sinner, discovered to us, not in the way of denunciation, but in the declaration of the mercy which it cost Christ His life, and sufferings, and blood in order to display.

Now, if our minds, familiarized as they are to a condition of sin in ourselves and others, have thought little of the state to which it has actually reduced us, let us seek the correction of these thoughts by looking at the picture now presented to us. For dark as it is, there is mercy in it, because it is the estimate of our condition by Him whose mercy presents the full and adequate and only remedy.

But it may be thought, perhaps, that this description hardly now applies, since civilization, and education, and christian institutions have so altered things. Consider, then, for a moment, whether it is so or not.

Civilization, and education, and what are called christian institutions, may change the outward condition of society, but can they reach the blindness of men's hearts, or rescue from the darkness of this world, or deliver from Satan's power, or give to the conscience the sense of the forgiveness of sins, or open the door of heaven to sinners in such a way as that their presence shall not tarnish the holiness of God's presence? If not, the whole condition of your moral being before God remains unchanged, and will remain unchanged, until you learn the force of that simple expression, "By faith that is in me."

Sin, then, as viewed by Christ, who is the "faithful witness," has the effect of blinding men's hearts to all true apprehensions of God's character, and to all sense of their own condition, and to all just perception of the eternal distinction between pollution and holiness. Hence the first thing named by Christ to be effected by Paul's testimony, is "To open their eyes;" because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not;" and Christ well knew that their eyes could not be opened to Satan's blinding power except, as He says, "By faith that is in me."

But do we seek for proofs of men's blindness of heart? What greater proof can be presented than their ignorance of the excellency of Christ, and their indifference to the proclaimed grace of God, without which they never can be saved? What greater proof of blindness than their fearlessness in traversing their pathway through this world, where every step is beset with danger, and every moment may plunge them in eternal ruin? What else but blindness can account for their intentness in pursuing the things of time, and their neglect of the things of eternity; and their fondly-cherished hopes of being right at the end, though wrong in every step of the way? What else but blindness can account for their vague hopes of reaching heaven at last, though refusing the work of Christ which alone can bring them there?

Natural blindness discovers itself by insensibility to all the objects of nature which make their appeal to our senses through the medium of sight. There may be present the beauty of spring or the glow of autumn-the birds of the air or the lilies of the field-the mountain ranges or the forest shade-the majestic sea or, the placid lake-the frightful precipice or the level plain-the lowering tempest or the bright sunshine; but he who is blind sees nothing of them all. He is alike unmoved by the danger and unattracted by the beauty of all in the midst of which he stands.

And are men attracted by the beauty of holiness-or do they tremble at the thought of dying in their sins? Are they won by the attractions of the cross -or do they live in dread of a judgment to come? Does not the apostle give this as a proof of men's blindness, that God's glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and men do not see it? He says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." In other words, so clearly is God's glory presented in the person of Christ, and in the salvation accomplished by the cross, that if a man does not see it, it is as palpable a proof of his spiritual blindness as in natural things for a man not to see a single ray of light when the sun is shining direct before him. But Christ says, "I send thee to open their eyes!" Do not, beloved friends, say as the Pharisees did, when Christ had opened the eyes of the man who was born blind, "Are we blind also?" Rather may you exclaim, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!"

But we must be "turned from darkness to light," as well as have our eyes opened; otherwise it would be but to make the darkness visible. It would avail but little for a man to open his eyes on a

scene enveloped in pitchy darkness. For every practical purpose he might as well be blind, or have his eyes closed, as to be destitute of light to guide his steps, or to enable him to distinguish objects one from another. Hence it is said, (1 Peter 2:9,) " God has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." If Christ sends the power of His grace through the gospel "to open our eyes," in the same grace He causes the light of God, which shines in our hearts, to shine also on everything around us. " I," says Christ, " am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." But mark, Christ is the light that must be followed. Where He is not, light is not. Where His example and His grace are not discerned, all is darkness. Alas t it is too little considered that Christ's presence in this world proved it to be a definite sphere of darkness; as it is said, " The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

Hence the power of Satan, who is Balled " the ruler of the darkness of this world;" and hence the tricks and traverses which he plays with men, and they have no light to detect his wiles. " If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not; because he hath the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth; because there is no light in him." But, then, this testimony of Jesus in the glory brings in the light of God upon everything. It " turns them from darkness" where people can see nothing clearly; " to light" where everything is discerned in its true character. For all things are made manifest by the light.

From the power of Satan unto God." It is said of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica that the people were turned by it to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God. Because these idols which were worshipped as gods, were, as the Scripture shows, but the representatives of Satan. " I say," says the apostle, " the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." In truth, the world is the place of Satan's power. It is his public house, where he presents his entertainment according to the tastes of the guests whom he receives. He has wine for the drunkard and oaths for the profane; wit for the witty and pleasures for the gay. He has gold for the miser, business for the thrifty, honors for the ambitious, admirers for the vain, science for the learned, religion for the serious-everything but a crucified and risen Jesus, one look at whom would spoil it all. For He said to Paul, " to whom I now send thee, to turn them from Satan UNTO GOD."

Sin has separated from God; and under its power men can do nothing else but wander farther and farther from God. But " Jesus suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The sense of guilt drives away from the presence of God; as we see in Adam, who, before any sentence of condemnation was pronounced upon him, hid himself amongst the trees of the garden, from the presence of God. But grace restores, not to paradise, but to God. It brings back into His presence in all the acceptance which Christ, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, has there. Men in their sins can only be happy with such happiness as the world affords, at a distance from God. It only lasts as long as the thought of God's presence is shut out. Let that be introduced into the gavest company that ever met together, and at once their gaiety is spoiled, as by the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast.

But how, it may be asked, if it be so, is a man to be delivered from Satan's power? I answer, who was it that said, " When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils?" Who was it that met the man amongst the tombs, who

was so fierce that no man durst pass by that way, and, in a word, commanded the legion of devils, by whom he was possessed, to come out of him? So that His very enemies said of Him, " with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they obey him." Satan can hold his own against any power but a, dead and risen Christ; who, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

" That they may receive the forgiveness of sins." Nothing gives the certain indication of faith in the soul and the working of God's Spirit but this. As Christ said to the Jews, " If ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins." There are many workings of the human mind, many attempts to satisfy the conscience, many efforts to meet the claims of the law, many hopes of heaven and fears of hell; but there is only one thing that can bring into the soul the knowledge of " the forgiveness of sins." But until this is known, there is no sure token that God is at work there, or that Christ has been received by faith. " Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Now, have none of you ever repeated, " I believe in the forgiveness of sins?" But, in doing so, whose sins did you believe in the forgiveness of? Peter's, Paul's, Mary Magdalene's, the thief's on the cross--and not your own? ' Then, they will be in heaven, and you will not if your belief goes no further than this. It is right to believe in the forgiveness of sins; but then it is necessary individually to receive the forgiveness of sins. Do you think God's Son suffered all He did to put away sin that you might go on in sin, and still reach heaven at last? Or do you think there is any means besides of getting rid of your sins? No; it is only " the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth us from all sin."

" That they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance amongst them that are sanctified."

Whatever the world and time may give to their votaries, it must be allowed on all hands that they leave a man portionless for eternity. " When he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory' shall not descend after him." But, most certainly, God is gathering to Himself out of this world those who are to be with Him through a long and blessed eternity, to be His heirs in glory. The apostle Peter speaks of this, when he says, " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

This living hope of this heavenly inheritance springs from faith in the resurrection of Christ. It is by this that God begets it in the soul. As Christ says, " by faith that is in me;" and He was then speaking from the heavenly glory. Now, God is sanctifying or setting apart the heirs of this inheritance. It is by the blood of Christ that this is accomplished; as the blood of the pass-over was the means of the redemption of Israel as the heirs of Canaan. " Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." It is this blood that sets apart from the world's judgment, because it meets the judgment due to sin. And if God saves sinners by the blood of Christ it is because that blood so puts away their sins that not a single stain remains to be brought into heaven, either to trouble their own consciences or to pollute the holiness of God's eternal presence.

But how am I to be assured of this inheritance? Christ says, "By faith that is in me." For however the apostle might amplify this ground of confidence, by showing the divine power and glory of Him who wrought this redemption, or the efficacy of the sacrifice by which it was accomplished, or the present position in glory of Him who humbled Himself to death for us; still, the title to eternal inheritance, as well as the reversal of all that marked our moral distance from God, is found in the single sentence, " By FAITH that is in me." For we must not fail here to mark that all this picture of man's misery comes to light through the remedy that was to be applied. It is not the detail (however we may have dwelt upon it) Of blindness and darkness and Satan's power, and sin's bondage and final hopelessness, that is prominent in this wondrous commission given by Christ to the apostle of the Gentiles; but it is the simple, energetic means by which this condition of ruin could alone be reversed. It is the sending a testimony through one who had gone as far as ever man's enmity could go in opposition to Christ, that all had been accomplished in order to put away sin-the certain efficacy of which the messenger in his own person was to be an example. Christ says in effect to Paul, I am going to send you to the Gentiles, who are blind, and in the dark, under the power of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and without God in the world, that they may know that I have labored and, suffered, and agonized and sweat blood, and met Satan's power and God's judgment in death, and I have conquered I And now bid them look to me for the fruit and power of that victory I have so hardly won!

Christ as the True Physician saw man's desperate condition, and provided the only remedy; though the victim Himself might be an utter stranger to His need.

Christ says, I send you to do this. But by what instruments or application was He to open their eyes? By what light was He to chase away their darkness?, By what power was He to deliver souls from Satan's grasp? How could they receive forgiveness of sins when God had declared that the wages of sin was death? How could they get their title and meetness for a place amongst those who were sanctified? How "read their title clear to mansions in the skies," when they were "by nature children of wrath?" The whole is summed up in this, "by faith that is in me."

Paul was to tell of the grace of that heart, to others, that had met, and melted, and, in sovereign mercy, had delivered his own. He was to tell of the love and power of One who had taken the sinner's place under death and judgment, that the- sinner through faith in Him might find a place before God in righteousness and heavenly glory. There was power enough in a risen Christ " to open their eyes," who so often, when here on earth, opened the eyes of the blind. There was power in Christ to bring in light amidst the darkest scenes of human depravity, for He is " the light of the world," and will soon appear as " the Sun of righteousness," to chase away all the darkness that broods over this world. But, now, the gospel is " God's power to salvation." When it is received by faith, it is God's instrument of deliverance. " God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

There was, and is, power enough in Christ to deliver from Satan's power, whom he conquered in death, "that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death." For even when on earth, the wondering multitudes exclaimed, "with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." He could forgive sins on earth, because He came to bear sin; and now that " He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," the testimony, far and wide, is borne, " through this

man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins." He can bring into heaven " 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." And let none of us forget that the objects of this redemption are viewed as " the fruit of the travail of His soul," who in death and sorrow, and in the infinitude of love, wrought this redemption.

## Hebrews

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There is a divine wisdom stamped upon every part of the word of God, which needs only the key to its understanding and a heart subject to God, in order to the perception and the precious enjoyment of it.

In this Epistle that wisdom shines with peculiar brightness; while the importance of the subjects upon which its rays are concentrated gives it a special claim upon the mind.

Sacrifice, priesthood, and religious ordinances-the subjects of this Epistle -are elements, one might almost say, for which there is a natural affinity in the human mind, almost independently of the adventitious circumstances of rudeness or intellectual culture, the possession of a divine revelation, or what men call natural religion. They are elements which make their appeal to the conscious necessity of man, whether that necessity is measured by the scattered notices of traditionary truth or by the perfect revelation of the word of God.

Thus the immense practical importance of this Epistle will at once be seen, since its object is to define the character of these elements, and to give them their just place and force according to the light of the gospel of the grace of God. Everything of the character of divinely-appointed ordinances, that ever had a claim upon the conscience, is here taken up and treated of -with a wisdom. essentially divine.

The circumstances of the persons to whom this Epistle was addressed gave the natural occasion (so to speak) for the application of this divine wisdom given to the Apostle. These circumstances are forcibly expressed in Rom. 9:4,5. " Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."

The manner in which this wisdom is applied can however be only understood by a consideration of the Epistle itself.

Generally, it may be said, that its design is to prove an entire abrogation of the whole range of religious' ordinances -divine ordinances, be it remembered. But the way in which it is shown they are abrogated is that in which this wisdom is conspicuous, and reflects the most wonderful light on the person and work and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is striking to notice by what terms the Spirit of God characterizes everything connected with a divinely-appointed ritual, after the work of Christ, by which it was abrogated, is accomplished.

In its first constitution there was no latitude permitted, as it was said to Moses, " See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount:" and this on the very ground that " the law was a shadow of good things to come." But now, since the work of Christ is accomplished, they are characterized as " meats and drinks and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation."

Now these are superseded, as the Epistle shows, not by an array of more spiritual ordinances, but by showing that their whole meaning, and harmony, and force are concentrated in the person and work, the position and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when it is considered that all which is called religion, (in these days,) apart from the blood of Christ and a conscience purged by His sacrifice, is composed of these ordinances, it will readily be conceived how important is the bearing of our Epistle; for its express object is to take up the whole means (of God's appointment) by which man could have to do with God, and to show that in their abrogation the believer, through the means of their putting away, is brought into the nearest possible connection with God, and into an entire dissociation from the world in which these ordinances had their place. So entirely is this so, that the position of the Christian is only to be expressed, according to the typical language of the Epistle, as that of "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil:" that is to say, the most unquestioned right of immediate access to God, on the one side, and on the other, as to the world, whether Jewish or heathen, religious or profane, it is but the "going forth therefore unto him, without the camp, bearing his reproach."

In the first two chapters of the Epistle we have everything on which this hinges. As plainly the glory of the person of Christ is essentially connected with His sacrifice, which is the foundation of all. But then it is Christ which is presented to us, and not merely a doctrine. But it is Christ as filling out these types, bringing the heart to see their meaning in Him, and in His work, which draws us naturally to Him, where He is, and thus sustains us, instead of those ordinances which are but the shadows of that which in its reality is seen in Christ.

The principle thus indicated, the study of the Epistle will supply the rest.

## I Am Crucified to the World

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Let me not love the world again,  
And seek my pleasure there;  
For Christ received His death from men,  
And woe they made Him bear.  
But let my love to Jesus be  
So constant and so strong,  
That my weak heart may ne'er be free  
To do the Savior wrong.  
What is there in the world, I ask,  
So irresistible?  
Themselves say 'tis a gilded mask,  
Who looks shall know it well.  
Has it a love like Jesus has,  
A constancy like His?  
Its love is no true love, alas!  
Its constancy naught is.  
Has it a beauty to compare  
With our Lord's blessed home?  
A native purity as rare  
As fills the "world to come?"  
None, none; 'tis but a withered thing,  
Loveless and full of change,  
Its beauty long has taken wing,  
A taint doth in it range.  
For such a wreck 'twee sad indeed  
That I from Christ should turn.

O Christ! from out my bosom weed  
All thoughts that for it yearn.  
Fill full my soul with thy sweet love,  
My eyes keep fixed upon  
The wonders thou hast wrought above  
For me, when time is gone.  
So shall I run, nor turn aside  
To one allurements here;  
Unswerving as the stars which ride  
Our darken'd hemisphere.

## Jesus Receiving a Sinner

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Luke 7:36-50

In this seventh of Luke we have a most lovely picture of the grace and the glory of the Lord Jesus in the scene in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Simon had bidden Jesus to a feast, thinking He was a prophet; but, to his great offense, He suffers a woman of the city, a sinner, to embrace His feet and, washing them with her tears, to wipe them with the hairs of her head. Simon thought that if Jesus had been a prophet He would have known who and what sort of a woman this was who touched Him, "for," said he, "she is a sinner." But now the Lord's turn comes, and He lets Simon know that He knew both him and the woman; and out of the mouth of the Pharisee himself, He brings the explanation of her conduct, so strange in his eyes; and his own condemnation because he had not done likewise. For truth came by Jesus Christ. He was the true light, which made every man manifest. Simon is laid bare to his own eyes in the presence of the Son of God, whilst the woman is set forth in all the fragrance of her sacrifice.

Jesus relates the parable of the two debtors, the one owing five hundred pence and the other fifty; and the grace of the creditor, who, seeing they had nothing to pay, frankly forgave them both. And then He gets from Simon the acknowledgment that love was due on the part of both for such royal grace; but most love from him to whom most was forgiven. And then at once, as so often in the gospels, the Lord takes His own place of preeminence and glory, and places Simon at His bar. Turning to the woman, He said unto Simon, " Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The Lord reveals to Simon that He was the creditor, and that the Pharisee was His debtor as well as the woman; but alas! for him, he thought little of his debt, and cared nothing for the grace that was there to forgive. There was no love. But the woman loved much. She knew the greatness of her debt, and that she had nothing to pay; but, O! the love of that blessed One, whose feet she could not cease to kiss. He had freely forgiven her all. What could she do but love Him? And O! the grace of Jesus, He accepts that woman's tears. Tears contrition, joy, and affection were there all centering on Him. And heaven was gazing with interest on this scene which offended the cold heart of the Pharisee. Yes, with joy; for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. And, O! what joy to Jesus! He had found His sheep which was lost; and, having found it, He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing. His love had reached this poor woman's heart, and He knew how to accept and to justify hers. In Simon's eyes she was but a sinner, whom he would not touch; in the eyes of Jesus she is one of His ransomed ones, drawn to Him of the Father in the faith of His perfect grace. She believed He would receive her; she believed that He would, although no one else would. Ah! her eye had been opened of the Father to see in Jesus the

friend of sinners. She was a sinner and she wanted the friend of sinners. One who could receive her in all her sins and yet deliver her from them.

She wanted a Savior. The sinner touches the Holy One, and through Him she becomes holy too. Thenceforth she belongs to God. Her faith had saved her. She loved much because she had much forgiven- and she had all forgiven because she believed. She expected such a welcome as this from such an one as Jesus, and she got it because she expected it. She wanted it; He had it to give. He had love enough to give it. She believed He would give it to her. She gave Him credit for what He professed to be-a Savior; for what God had set Him forth as being-Jesus; who came into the world to save sinners, and who came to them because He LOVED them. This the woman believed. She believed that He loved her, and that He loved her just because she was a sinner. Did He disappoint her confidence? Did He ever disappoint confidence in His love? Never. And mark again, the woman had nothing to commend her. She was but a sinner-a woman of the city. Yes; let me say it-a harlot! Will Jesus receive such? Will the Son of God let her touch Him? Will not that Holy One retire from the presence of such a polluted one? Ah! He came to meet her He was there to receive her, and to assure her of His grace.

He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners; and sinners He called because He loved them. And, blessed be His name, He loves such still. He has a place in His heart for such. O, what a large place! And more, He lets them know it. He calls them to His bosom. He lets them know that if others reject them, He receives sinners-that He plucks brands from the burning. He takes away their filthy garments, and clothes them with change of raiment. And what is more, He makes them His friends. There was the interchange of divine affections between Jesus and this woman of the city. He accepted her love. O wondrous grace! And this tie is an eternal one; for He saves us for eternal glory with Himself. Blessed and adorable Savior

Jesus, thine everlasting grace

Our scanty thought surpasses far.

Thy heart still melts with tenderness-

Thine arms of love still open are,

Repenting sinners to receive,

That MERCY they may taste and live.

" Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

## Brief Notes of a Lecture on John 1:1-14

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This is a part of the truth connected with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, which must always be associated with whatever else we learn of Him. We may think about His sympathy, His love, His humiliation, His sufferings, and His death, but we must always associate with it what is declared here. The mystery of godliness is, that " God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The basis of all this is presented here.

It is this which stamps its value on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus-on His blood. " He was in the beginning with God," though He hung upon the cross. Looking at His various offices we must still connect with them this great truth. As our Savior, our Intercessor, our High Priest, " He was in the beginning with God." HE WAS GOD: no less the Creator than the Redeemer, the ever-living God. In His coming again, too, He will be " God manifest in the flesh." While our hearts are often drawn to the truth of God's word, and to Him as God's center, let us remember that He has an existence now-we have to do with Christ now. He was down here in the world, manifest in the flesh; he is taken up into glory. He now exists in the presence of God. All that He ever was, all the glory in which He will appear, are centered in Him now.

We have to do with Him in all the power which was displayed when He said, " Let there be light, and there was light." One reason why Christians are so lacking in vital power is, that the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is so little the object of their intimacy. I am called to learn God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should I be impoverished when I am told that the apostle was called to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ? Why should I lack when He is mine, and when all fullness is in Him? Do I scan this subject with an indolent mind? Do I say I have learned this? I can never understand God but by faith. The moment I reason I limit.

Look at the subject before us, the first verse; will reason help us there? Can I travel into that void of ages before ever the stars were created? Can my mind help me in thinking about Him who never had a beginning. The Scriptures begin to unfold by a description of the works of God; but here is One who was before all His works. God is before He acts. He formed all things by the word of His power. He created man able to contemplate His works, but He was before He began to create.

This is a subject beyond the reach of man. It is not a human apprehension of Christ that will save a man. But faith is simple. God gives the Spirit that we may understand the things of God.

Verse 2. Here I learn the history of Him who tabernacled with us. " He was in the beginning with God." Is it ordinary with our souls to think of God manifest in the flesh being engaged in creation? Are our souls habitually resting on this-He is almighty to save? All the manifestations of God have been through the Son. He is the " Wisdom" of Prov. 8; and I find here, that if His generation is to be declared it goes back into eternity. Creation is the work of Christ: may I not trust Him then? The soul needs to be established in this truth. He is the center of all God's actings. Faith never will

have its true bearing unless seeing that Jesus hanging on the cross was truly God. (Col. 1:15-19.) When we read such statements as these where do they carry the soul? He who hung upon the cross fills all things-is the eternal God.

When the heaven and earth are no more His existence remains unchanged, He is the Alpha and the Omega. " I am He that was dead and am alive for evermore." But with whom am I associated when I receive Christ? I receive Him of whom it is said, " God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." In any intercourse with Jesus that is what He is. If I rest upon the blood of Him who is all this, in the accomplished work of Him who is all this, what can shake me? When heart and flesh fail, when all will be shaken, I may say-yes, but Christ never can be shaken. He not only creates all things but upholds all things by the word of His power. He was the full divine wisdom and divine power veiled in humanity, but never laying aside His Godhead. I can be satisfied with a very little knowledge of Christ when I have a thousand props to lean upon; but when everything fails then Jesus becomes the only and essential stay of the soul.

The apostle trusted in God that raiseth the dead, because he was always delivered to death for Jesus' sake; and it was his trust in God, I might say his companionship with God, which enabled him to say, " thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." But, alas! how little is He known to us in all the depths of His love! What has God given us? the riches of the universe? He has given me Him who formed the universe, as well as the untraceable riches of Christ. What are men doing in rejecting Christ? How can they get on in the world without Christ?

Ver. 4, 5. The world as one common mass is darkness; light is that which belongs to God. There are only two things which God is-God is light and God is love. So Jesus here is light. But, then, mark His reception. What is the world's darkness? It did not receive Him, who was the light. Was Jesus known as God? Was there not always a conflict in men's minds about Him, when here in the world? Is it not so now? Don't talk about light; there is the light of science, the light of reason, the light of nature, and a thousand other kinds of light; but the life was the light of men. There is no understanding, no holiness, no likeness to God, but by the reception of Him who is the light. But then so received He is the life as well as the light. Connected with God's display of grace by Jesus Christ, He was the sacrifice for sin, to give efficacy to that grace. He was that, but man knew Him not.

Ver. 10, 11. We know the truth of this; but would any one imagine that men could be so bad, that when God came,-not by law, not as John the Baptist did, but in the full display of grace-that they would reject Him? In Himself He carried the secret of divine love. He came to accomplish redemption as well as to proclaim it. Beforehand we never could have judged so badly of men as that; but the death of Christ brings out the plain truth. If I have received Christ I have received Him plainly as the crucified One. For He is unfolded in all His character to us, though not to them. He was a living person in the midst of Israel, and so He was rejected, though come there; it was true, where any received Him, it was as what He was.

It is not enough for me to have Christ for my salvation, I want Him for my everyday necessities. If I am to be happy, if I am to enter into the joy which belongs to me, Christ in His glory must be the subject of my thoughts. We do not make a business of our religion. But is it an unhappy business to be always thinking about Christ, who laid aside all His riches to die for me? Who says, "all things are yours, for ye are Christ's?" But, "all men have not faith." One thing is needful. Men are not enough with Christ to tell of Christ. They do not come forth from their ivory palaces, their garments smelling of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. May the Lord stir up our hearts. We shall not be long here to study Christ or to witness for Him. We are passing on. It becomes us to remember that the time is short. We ought not to be satisfied with knowing Christ; we ought to serve Christ. But to serve Him we must know Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." You would say it was a terrible thing to see a king coming to his dominions and his subjects all refusing him. It was this which led Christ to say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" You say, no, Christ only once could have gathered; but you must not forget that Christ was acting before He appeared in the flesh. In Israel He was acting as much in reality before He came in the flesh as afterward. It was only their final crowning act of refusal when they rejected Him. God's counsels of mercy and man's evil run on in parallel lines.

Ver. 12. He was here, but was rejected. Who could have said, prior to the fact, that the few disciples who admitted His claims, were the only people whom God acknowledged? And yet it was so. When reason takes the lead it may often induce the heart to question-"is it possible that all men should be going the wrong way?" So reasons the natural mind. Can all be wrong, except the few who receive Christ? Let God settle that.

Beloved friends, remember Scripture speaks thus: "Many are called, but few are chosen." The majority are on the part of Satan in this dispensation. "Fear not, little flock," says Christ; because, compared with the mass, it is a little flock. How wonderful is the unfolding of this truth of "sons of God!" They became altered in their positive relationship to God. Do not let me think it a light thing to be a child of God. Who is it that talks thus? What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Who can compensate me if I give up the world for Christ? What, talk of giving up for Christ! The heart that knows Him never talks thus. There is something far beyond the world. We are called to inherit all things. The things of faith are the only realities. With Moses the future was pregnant with eternal riches.

"Sons of God"-what does this unfold to our heart? I have a Father above-my eternal hopes are in His hands-Jesus is the One with whom I am associated. Are our hearts resting on these things-associated with God as a father? "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Christ is coming again. He came once to accomplish redemption-He will come again to gather in the fruits of redemption, "even to them that believe on his name." I may question whether I have received Christ, but it is those who have believed on His name that have received Him. If I know that Jesus is the Son of God-if I believe God's testimony about Him-that is receiving Christ. I do not speak of the assent of the judgment merely. "The whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." When a person finds out that he is lost, then he inquires, "What must I do to be saved?" That which links any one to Christ is the reception of Him by faith. We know that He came to sinners. If I am looking at myself, it will blot my title. (ver. 13.)

Redemption is by faith. But then he traces here what is accomplished when Christ is received. There is a hand behind that which is seen. It is God working with the Word, either by the preaching of the Word or the reception of it. "Born of God" is a vital thing. That which is born of a corrupt stock is corrupt-no good in it; but that which is born of God has what flesh could not impart, which blood could not communicate. It is a life which is associated with Him who is life. It is a real thing. I am created anew in Christ Jesus. (ver. 14.) If this is God's description of His own Son-this He who was engaged in redemption, who on the cross said, "it is finished"-is it not a sure resting place for the soul? All I have to do now is to glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are His." Should it not be my study continually that I may know Him? Let me be found searching where my desires will never return barren. We stop short of delighting ourselves in the Lord. God is our joy. Should not the heart be resting continually on Him? There is a joy unspeakable and full of glory. How many of us know this?

In days of increasing gloom and perplexity, like the present, the soul of the saint is the more sent into its sure hiding-place or up to its Pisgah heights of hope and observation. It gets more accustomed to meditate on the strength of these foundations which God has put under our feet, the intimacy of that communion into which He has even now introduced our hearts, and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes. In connection with this last thing I would listen to the voices of the Spirit to the churches in Rev. 2, These words may be read with two intents; either to see what the moral standing of those churches was and then to get admonition for our souls, or to see what the promises of Christ to them were, that we get joy and consolation. It is only in this respect that I am now reading them, listening simply to those several promises which, the Lord makes to His faithful ones, and which will be found, I believe, to unfold before us in order the joys and glories which await the saints in coming days.

Ephesus.-" To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." This is the simplest form of promise. It tells the saint that his roots feed on the very kernels, or fat kidneys of eternal life, so to speak. Those outside shall have the leaves of this same tree for healing, (Rev. 22,) but the saints of the heavens shall have more. The very fruit of the tree itself, gathered, as it were, immediately from it, where it grows in the midst of God's garden-not the fruit brought to them, but gathered by their own hands off the very tree. Strong intimation of the freshness, the constant freshness, of that life that is theirs. The Lamb shall lead them to the fountains of living water-not to streams or channels, but to the spring-head of the river of life. (7) All this again telling the undiluted vigor of our life; as Jesus says, (and what can pass beyond such words,) "Because I live, ye shall live also." Here in this promise to Ephesus is the tree of life partaken of immediately by the heavenly saints. For this is their portion in life, to receive it from, and to nourish it at, the very fountains and roofs themselves.

Smyrna. -" Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." This is something beyond what had been previously said to Ephesus. Here life is regarded rather as a thing gained than imparted. It was imparted in its richest form to Ephesus, but here we see it gained by Smyrna; for Smyrna wail sorely tried: some were cast into prison, and all of them were in tribulation. They were to suffer many things; but they are promised, on being faithful unto death, a crown of life, and life is thus spoken of as what they had earned or gained; as James in like manner speaks, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them who

endure trial:" and this is beautiful in its season. The Lord delights to own the faith of His saints, and if they have shown that they loved not their life in this world unto death, it shall be as though they had gained it in the world-- to come. Life shall be as a crown to them there, as the glorious reward of not having cared for it here.

Pergamos.-" To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." We have another source of joy disclosed here. Life is possessed, and that abundantly and honorably, as we saw at Ephesus and Smyrna; but there is here the promise of another joy--the sense of the Lord's personal favor and affection--communion with Him of such kind as is known only by hearts closely knit together in those delights and remembrances with which a stranger could not intermeddle. This is here spoken of to the faithful remnant in Pergamos.

They had held His faith in the midst of difficulties, and clung to His name, and this should be rewarded with that which is ever most precious---tokens of personal affection, waking the delighted sense and assurance of the heart of the Lord being knit to their heart. If the heart in this wilderness know its own bitterness, from the waters of Marah that flow here, there it shall know its own delights from the enjoyment and conscious smile of Jesus. He will kiss His saint 44 with the kisses of his mouth," he will retire as from the scene of the public glory to do this; or, in the midst of it all, give that pledge which shall speak it. It is the hidden manna which is here fed upon, and the stone here received has a name on it which none know but he who receives it. This, as another has said, all expresses this individual affection. It is not public joy, but delight in the conscious possession of the Lord's love. How blessed a character of joy in the coming day is this! Life possessed in abundance and in honor we have already seen, as at Ephesus and Smyrna; but here at Pergamos we advance to another possession, not glory in any form of it as yet, but the blessed certainty and consciousness of the Lord's personal affection.

Thyatira.-" He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father: and I will give him the morning star." Now we read public scenes, scenes of power and glory. This is not merely life, though enjoyed never so blessedly; nor simple personal affection and individual joy therein, but here is something displayed in honor and strength abroad; here is power and glory in the first character in which the glories of the saints are destined hereafter to be unfolded--that is, in their being the companions of the Lord in the day when He comes forth to make His enemies His footstool; or, according to the decree of the second Psalm, to break them with a rod of iron, to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This will be His power just before He takes His kingdom. This will be His ridding out all that would have been inconsistent with the kingdom. This will be the girding of the sword on the thigh, like David, ere the throne be ascended, like Solomon, (Psa. 45,) it will be the rider's action ere the reign of the thousand years be begun. Rev. 19; 20. This is glory, this is manifested power; the first exercise of it in the hand of Christ, the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven; and in that act of power and display of glory the saints (as we are here instructed and promised) shall be with Him, they outliving, gloriously outliving, all that night of horrible storm and dread judicial darkness, as the star which " flames in the forehead of the morning sky," outlives the gloomiest night. This is blessed in its place, and here given to us in due season; for after the life and the personal hidden joy, the public glories thus begin to be ushered forth; for we shall find that this one, here spoken of

to Thyatira, is but the first of a long and brilliant train of them.

Sardis.-" They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." This is a stage onward in the scenes of the glory. The vengeance has been taken; the sword of him who sits on the white horse has done its righteous service, and the vessels of the potter have been broken, and the kingdom has come. Jesus here promises to His faithful ones, that He will confess them before His Father and His angels. This is not redeeming them from judgment, or saving their souls, (as we speak,) but owning them, publicly owning them, before the assembled dignities of the kingdom. For He promises them that they shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. This is not that they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That they have done, it is true, but that enables them to appear without reserve or blot before the throne; (7:9);- but here it is not as before the throne, but as walking in white with Jesus in the kingdom. That hand, which now in grace washes their feet, will then take them into it, as it were, and own full companionship then in the realms of glory with Him. What a character of joy is this! To be publicly owned thus, as before (as we read to Pergamos) privately personally caressed. In how many ways does the Spirit of God here trace the coming joys of His saints! The life, the love, the glory, that are reserved for them The tree of life and its crown, too, the white stone, carrying to the deepest senses of the heart the pledge of love; and then companionship with the King of Glory in His walks through His bright and happy dominions. But even more than this the same Spirit has to tell.

2. They are used as the only adorning or clothing of the Lord's beautiful bride. (Rev. 19)

3. They are used by them also as following the rider on the white horse. This expresses their ability to join Christ in the exercise of judgment, so fully are they delivered from all judgment themselves. (Rev. 19)

4. They are used by them also as they walk with Christ in the kingdom. This expresses their worthiness to be companions of the king under the bright and peaceful shining, and along the paths of the glory. (Rev. 3)

5. Finally, they are used by them also as they sit on their own thrones. This expresses their priestly purity, combined with their royal dignity. (Rev. 4)

Thus, in each condition and action in which the glorified saints appear, they are seen as spotless ones, pure and unsullied, because of that righteousness in which, through grace, they stand. They appear before God-they judge the world-they walk in the dominions of the great King of glory, in immediate company with Himself-they sit on their own thrones, all in white, in owned and conscious righteousness. A white-robed people indeed; not a blot on them; but all consistent with the divine light around. And the whore, or apostate woman, has, in contradiction of this, her purple and scarlet. (Rev. 17:4.)

Philadelphia.-"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, that cometh out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." We have just seen the heir of the kingdom as the companion of the Lord of the kingdom, abroad in the light of the glory, walking in white with Him, owned before the Father and the angels. Here the promise is, that

the faithful one shall have his place in the system of the glory itself. That he shall be of that glorious order of kings and priests who shall then form the character of the scene. Each of, them being a pillar in the temple, and each enrolled as of the city. High and holy dignities! The saints integral parts of that glorious economy, as in the church on earth, they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, and grow together, all compacted, and fitly formed, like the members of the body, each being needed to the general completeness; so in the glory, shall each of the faithful ones to Jesus fill his place in the temple and city, a needed member of that royal priesthood then established in their holy government in the heavens, where the new Jerusalem dwells and shines. What honor is put on them here! Owned abroad, in his companionship with the Lord, walking, as hand in hand, through the rich and wide scene of glory, confessed before all; and also owned within, as bearing each in himself a part of the glory, every vessel needed to the full expression of the light of the new Jerusalem, and formed as a vital part of the fullness of Him who is to fill all in all, a king and a priest; each of them occupying his several rank and station in the temple and the city, the Salem of the true Melchizedec. What a place of dignity! Surely, love delights to show what it can do and will do for its object! O if we had but hearts to prize all these things, and to prize them ' because of their telling us of this love which has counseled these things for us! For what higher, happier thought can we have even of glory itself, than that it is the manner in which love lets us know what it will do for its elect one. Poor, poor heart that moves so little at these things, while the mind stirs the conceptions of them.

Laodicea.-" To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Here the highest point of glory is reached. This is the bright and sunny elevation to which this passage, through the joys and honors of the kingdom and presence of Jesus, has conducted us. Here the faithful one enters into " the joy of his Lord"-sharing His throne. Not only owned by Him abroad, and established with Him within-walking in white with Him, or fixed as a needed and honored portion of the great system of royal priesthood; but with Him seated in the supreme place. What could be done more than is done? But from this elevation can our souls look back and trace the journey? or rather, while they do so, can they value what thus they gaze at, and long for a draft of these joys, and for a sight of these glories, as the hart pants after the water-brooks, and the watchman waits for the morning? This is what we want-a heart to prize our portion. The joys are rich, and the glories are bright, but the heart is feebly responsive.

Exceeding great and precious things surely have now passed before us. The tree and crown of life-the white stone -the morning star-the walk in white abroad through the paths of glory, and residence at home in the temple and city of glory-with a place on the throne itself-these are ours, as faithful to Jesus. Life enjoyed in abundance-and honor, friendship, and love, tasted in their deepest personal intimacies-and glory shared in all the displays of it, whether in the power of judgment on the enemy, or in all the honors and dignities of the kingdom. If Jesus Himself be prized, those things will be welcomed by us. If He Himself be loved, all this nearness to Him in life, affection, and glory, will be the heaven we desire. But is He our object? Do we make Jesus such? Can we send the message of the loving, longing soul after Him, and say, " Tell him that I am sick of love." This is the point to start from, or rather this is the mind both to start and to travel with, and then all will be well, and all welcome, as we pass along through that scene of varied joy and glory which these chapters thus in due order so open and spread out before us. And these joys and

glories tell us that we are Christ's object, for they surely can be the portion only of those whom He delights to honor and to bless.

## Brief Notes of a Lecture on John 17

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There are two things precious to us before we arrive at the full result of God's thoughts of grace: the first is the perfect manifestation of Himself in Christ; and the second, this being brought into our hearts; Christ being in us-not merely revealed to us, but communicated to us. In this chapter we get, in general, what Christ is for us and will be to us as on earth, and in the end what He will be to us in heaven. And this last point I have often thought the saints do not get with sufficient clearness. It is not merely mercy to sinners, but man brought into a blessedness that was not thought of when men were not sinners.

The Lord lays the ground of it all in His own Person and work before He begins to pray. First, He is the Son with the Father; and second, He is the Accomplisher of the work by 'which the Father is glorified. First, we get His Person, the eternal life which was with the Father. God had revealed Himself as Almighty and as Jehovah, and accordingly He protected Abraham and was the God of Israel. But these names did not carry eternal life in them. But now the Son comes, that eternal life might be manifested, as it is in 1 John 1. " We have seen and declare unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." And then, secondly, we have His work because of the sin of man. We have the glory of Christ in this double character, and in Him thus glorified we get the ground-work of all that we are. Our whole condition hangs on Christ glorified. Man-though He was much more than man-is now glorified in the presence of God. He is there, first, as Son; and, secondly, in virtue of His work as man on the earth. God now takes the chief of sinners, cleanses him from all sin through the precious blood of Christ, and instead of giving Him a place with the first Adam in his rejection, He gives him one with the Second Adam in glory.

Beloved friends, we want to know redemption-we want to know that whilst there is a judgment to come, before it has come God has interfered in grace and wrought redemption in the cross of His Son. The same Son who is to come to judge has come in grace already. So now the ground on which I stand with God is not that of a responsible man to answer in the judgment, but because I was utterly lost on that ground, God has put me on another. When the Judge comes, He has saved me already.

Now He goes on to apply it. "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world," &c. That is, He brings them into the place of sons. And how? O what a blessing-as He knew it. O if we believed what the worth of Christ's work in humiliation is and what the love of Christ's heart is-how it could not be satisfied without our being in the very blessedness He Himself was in! It is love without reserve. It takes the person that is loved and holds back nothing. If it is the words the Father has given him, He has given them to us; if the glory, He has given it to us; if the love, He manifests the Father's name that it may be in us. It is not dispensing downwards to a child of Adam what a child of Adam could receive, but becoming life to the soul, so as to be power in us, so that we might enjoy what He does.

If you are laboring to meet a Judge, all this is simple madness. Men think they have to meet the God of judgment as responsible sinners to answer for themselves. That is the way people delude

themselves. Do you think you could stand? It is madness to dream of such a thing. It is denying Christianity altogether. Have you peace?-perfect peace-Christ's own peace? If not, you have not got what Christ gives. You have not got what Christ wrought, and brought, and gives-a peace- with the Father as He Himself had it.

In verse 8 we see the interest that Christ's heart takes in making us happy. " I have given them the words which thou gavest me," &c. He desires we may enjoy the fellowship of the Father as He does. I can understand how the world hinders the enjoyment of it; but do you believe it? Do not fancy it is learning you need; it is not; it is grace. It is the conscience understanding that when I could not answer for myself, another in love came and answered for me. It is the soul brought through divine teaching in the conscience to know that it is lost; but, that being a settled thing, to know another thing that the Father is on my neck for joy that I am found. There will be conflict and temptation, but there will be no conflict with Him.

He now begins to pray for them. (Verses 9.-13.) All this refers to our place in the world. " And now I am no more in the world," &c. " And these things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." O mark it well-his joy. I need not ask you, Christians, if you think Christ meant to deceive us. Well, if not, Do you believe this? Have you got it? His joy fulfilled in yourselves? It is not our weakness that, hinders; for when I am weak, then I am strong. It is the very thing I would seek to drive out-this thought of our Weakness having to do with it, the thought of the first Adam standing. You will get plenty of leaves but no fruit. Let no man eat fruit of thee forever is the judgment of God on this barren fig-tree. It rejected and crucified His Son. It must be cut down. Now is the judgment of this world; and as individuals we must be brought to this in the cross. We must be brought to that point of the cross in which we see that man was enmity against God come to him in grace. (Men were sinners before.) But having come there, I meet in spirit Christ on the cross, and as He has taken my place, I get His place-a place in Himself and with Himself in the glory to which He is gone.

He now puts them in the place of testimony. " I have given them thy word," " and the world hath hated them," &c. This also is His own place. " Because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "They are not of the world," &c. Again, let me ask you, Do you believe that? "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." Nobody' could send us into England. We are in it. God could send an angel into the world. That is the way that Christ sends us-redeemed sinners-who are not of it. " I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." That is negative. Then in verse 17 we get " Sanctify them through thy truth." That is the word-the one guide in this wilderness. Moses said, " Show me now"-not a way-but "thy way, that I may know thee." O that is what the Christian wants. My way shows what I am, and God's way shows what He is, as regards the world, and that is Christ.

In verses 18, 19 He goes further. " And for their sakes I sanctify myself," &c. I get not merely the word as guiding, but I get it all as light and love in Christ Jesus. Christ has set Himself apart-if I may reverently say so-as the glorified model man. The Holy Ghost takes that and ministers it to my soul. I love it--I feed on it. Thus we are taken out of the evil by and to the good. You will never get through the world happily in any other way. Is there happiness in vanity? It is that which leads astray. But show me a heart that through grace is always thinking of Christ and it is always happy.

For the love of Christ that has gone up for us has come down to us. I know I have got for my joy what is, the Father's everlasting delight. He loves me! O that is the delight of my heart. It is that that keeps the heart away from evil. In ninety-nine things out of a hundred that you do wrong-that are not holiness-it is not that you do not know that they are wrong. It is not light that you want; it is power. You have not Christ as power. Your heart is not delighting in Christ. If it were, the evil would not have power over you. It would not occur to you. When my soul is walking with Christ, the Lord Himself is there to sanctify. The heart that is thus occupied with Jesus has got its object. Therefore He said, " He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." There is not the craving, then, that makes a man unhappy; and there is not the craving that spoils your judgment of right and wrong. We want an object that is a motive. It gives hope and energy; but besides, there is communion, and it is communion that makes happy.

That is our present portion, but He goes further. "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them." Still it is manifestation; He is not speaking of communion here, He does not say, "I in them, and they in me," as in 14. It is, "I in them and thou in me." It is display, Christ in the Father, and we in Christ.

We have not yet got to our own proper portion. We have had the Father's name manifested, His word given to us, Christ setting Himself apart for us, and giving us the glory the Father had given Him. But all that is down here. That does not satisfy Jesus-He wants them with Himself. It is not to be displayed-not He there, and we here-but to be with Him. "That they may be with me." That is the Church's PROPER place. That is what distinctively connects us with Christ. " O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee," &c. Christ was in the world, He was despised in the world. Oh, but you have loved me, He says to the Father, before ever there was a world. I want them to be with me according to this love-to be in the blessedness and understanding of the love you had to me before ever there was a world to manifest me in. It is not display, which is wonderful enough, but to be at home with Him according to the love he had with the Father before the world was.

More than this: He wants us to know it now. "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." Again, I would say, Christ does not mean to deceive us. Have you got what Christ is here giving? Do you know that the Father loves you as He loved Jesus? Oh, what a world we are in! " The world hath not known thee." But where have your thoughts been this day? Have they been filled with Christ, in the consciousness that you are the delight of the Father? It does not need intelligence to know that the Father loves me, when He is on my neck and I in my rags. It is not being converted or thinking of progress. The prodigal was not thinking of his progress then. He was with his Father. It is one thing to be making inquiries as to the progress of my heart, and another to know that there is not an atom of the Father's heart He holds back. But how can we have it? Through this redemption. For He cannot have the sin. Therefore, He gave the everlasting love of His heart for me, sinner as I am. But when I have learned and known it, I enjoy it. What I want you to have is the knowledge and consciousness of the Father's love in this way. And, indeed, the highest apprehensions of love a saint can have is the very love that was proved for the vilest of sinners. The sin is gone, and in the place, where I see it gone, I have learned this perfect love. And if there is a sinner here, I present to you this present salvation. Why? Because Christ is glorified at the right hand of God. Whoever receives it, enters at once into the fruit of Christ's work, which God has accepted, and

proved that He has, in that He has set Him at His right hand.

To you, who are saints, I would say, Are you walking as redeemed persons in the earth? We need exhortations daily, every one of us; but are you walking in the consciousness of redemption? Have you this consciousness of being loved of the Father as Christ is? If you have, then walk in it.

One word I would add on the twenty-fourth verse:-" That they may be with me, where I am." This connects itself with the rapture of the Church; and so, when Paul speaks of it, he finishes when he has said, " So shall we be ever with the Lord." He has nothing more to add. " We shall be ever with the Lord." Does it ring in your heart as the fullest, richest blessing?

## The King in His Beauty

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### Psalm 45

The true force of Scripture is never found except in its ascertained meaning, though, apart from this, piety may be taught from Scripture, and a great deal of truth presented to the mind; though, necessarily, failing in its power from this consideration,-that it is not the living, and perfect, and energetic thought of God in the definiteness of the language and designed application of the Holy Spirit.

Very much that is taught from Scripture is not the meaning of Scripture, even assuming that which is taught is truth, so far as it goes. This in itself may account for the little progress in the knowledge of the divine counsels, of the people of God, and also for the want of divine certainty in what is held as truth. Truth not held direct from the word of God, and based upon its ascertained meaning, can never give the ground of that certainty, the general lack of which, even amongst Christians, is to be deplored. " He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

Where Scripture is not known it cannot be taught; but where it is known it is both infinite joy and profit to the soul. The strength, the richness, the beauty, as well as the immutability of truth, come thus to have their place in the heart, and God is known-known by the revelation He makes of Himself, His counsels, and His ways. These thoughts have been awakened by meditation on this most rich and precious psalm. The beauty of which, and in great degree its preciousness, is only to be rightly apprehended by seeing its direct bearing and application apart from all the sentiment and imagination, or even doctrine, that may be drafted from other parts of Scripture and incorporated with it.

The subject of the psalm is obvious from its application to Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews: " Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom: thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Heb. 1:8,9.) But how vague and general must be any interpretation of the psalm as a whole, if the place which Christ, as the Messiah of Israel, holds in the counsels of God, and the connection of His future glory as King in Zion and on earth be not seen.

It is " Maschil," or a psalm of instruction, and " a song of loves," as we see by the title it bears.

In the first verse the writer announces his subject to be, " things which he has made touching the KING." For the subject of the psalm is the triumph, reign, and union of Christ with the godly Jews in Jerusalem in the latter day. It is Christ, as the Jehovah of Israel, celebrated in His character of King. " The queen" may appear in the psalm, and " the virgins that follow her;" but they are prominent only as connected with the installation and glory of the King. " My tongue is the pen of a ready writer," indicates the sense of divine guidance in what is uttered in the psalm; as the pen of a ready writer is guided in every movement by the hand of him by whom it is grasped.

The prophets testify that it is Jehovah who will appear in power for the deliverance of His people, as may be seen in Isa. 66 compared with Zech. 9:18, 12-16; 10:3; 12:7, 8; 14:3-4. But Zech. 9:9, and even 14:4, with this psalm, show that if it is Jehovah, it is also the man Christ. Compare Dan. 7:22; Mic. 1:5.

Christ, in the beauty of His Person, as "fairer than the children of men"- though man-with "grace poured into his lips," as His gracious words on earth declared, and now blessed of God forever, give the subject of the second verse. His might, and glory, and majesty, and subduing power, for the establishment of "truth, meekness, and righteousness" in the earth, are the subjects of verses 3-5. His Godhead glory is next marked, and the righteousness of His reign declared-"the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter." For His love of righteousness, when He stood on earth for God as the witness of righteousness, and testified of the world that its works were evil, He is now anointed by God with the oil of gladness above His fellows. (See Phil. 2:6-11, as to His heavenly glory.) Next, He comes forth to the marriage with Israel, with all the fragrance of the heavenly courts- His garments smelling of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces.

The daughter, the queen in gold of Ophir, is the earthly Jerusalem, seen as restored by grace. No longer, as in the days of Messiah's humiliation, claiming descent from Abraham; but saying, as in Isaiah, "Doubtless, thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." "The virgins her companions" are the other cities of Judah; for it is Jerusalem to whom the Lord is married, and over whom He rejoices as the bridegroom rejoicing over the bride; as it is Jerusalem that will be called Jehovah-Shammah-the Lord is there. But the other cities of Judah will be round about her, and share in her nuptial joy and glory. The border nations too will be there "as the daughter of Tire," &c.

And "the rich amongst the people will entreat her favor." (See Isa. 60 throughout.)

It is well to have the heart attracted by the beauty of the Lord Jesus, but then it should be by His real beauty; but how can this be known except in the expression of it which the spirit gives?

It is not good to stay at the thought of His grace in adaptation to our necessities, essential as it is to know this. We must go a step farther; for Christ so known is not Christ in His beauty, and power, and glory. It is Christ as the remedy of our wretchedness, in a certain sense it is a selfish view of Christ, blessed as it is thus to know Him. Hence the necessity of some farther development of truth for the feeding of God's people than many, who are rightly set on the conversion of souls, would be contented with. All of Christ is precious; and it is well to have the heart filled with Him, that so we may delight in the thought of so soon seeing Him as He is, and being made like Him. For this is the Church's place and hope, in contrast with the hope of Israel, which will be realized in their association with the earthly glory of their Messiah and King.

## The Light of the Body Is the Eye

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Read Luke 11:33-36.

THE candle being lighted, there it is, whether people can see it or not. A blind man perceives not the light, though it may be shining never so bright. So if a man likes to go in the dark, I should say he has some bad motive in his heart; or else his eyes are bad, and cannot bear the light. But if my eyes are sound, I joy in the light. So the word is painful to one who has not clear eye-sight, who has not the single eye. When the soul is in health there is full perception of the word; the whole body is full of light, having no part dark.

This is a most solemn word to us all. A person, converted but yesterday, may be full of light, though he may, in many things, need the teaching of God. Still, it applies as much to the babe in Christ as to the grown man. If we are only faithful to the light, God will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. But there is a teaching of God, when God Himself is in the soul; then everything is seen in God's light.

If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not; but if he is walking in the night, he has to think which turning to take, but if walking in the daylight, he may walk on without thought.

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light, having no part dark." When the candle is there, we see all around; the light shows itself, and by itself shows everything around.

The eye receives the light. The light never varies. It is the eye which varies. The eye is either single or evil. It is not said single or double; but single or evil. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." "The light of the body is the eye." If Christ be my object, my whole body will be full of light; if not, it will be all darkness; since it is either all Christ, or it is all evil, however religious it may appear.

If I have only Christ as my object, all is simple-I may have difficulties to overcome; nay, if following Christ only, in a world that is entirely opposed to Him, it must inevitably lead to difficulties in the path; still the path will be plain and simple.

The light is set on a candlestick, "that they which come in may see the light." Therefore one is forced into this question-Do you see it or not? Christ has set up the light in the world. He was in the world, and for the world; but does the world see the light? God has displayed Himself fully in Christ; and if Christ has displayed Himself to your soul, the effect of that will be to manifest your condition. Do you say, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father?" If so, there comes out this secret, you have something in your heart that is taking precedence of Christ there.

When I do not find my body full of light in any given circumstance, I know there is something not single in my eye -something that has not yet given way before the power of Christ-something not yet given up, or something perhaps that has come in. If I am keeping anything in my heart besides Christ, my conscience is bad; and my eye being evil, my whole body is full of darkness. People often say they cannot see: of course they cannot, when they have some other light. Moreover, that

which they do see will quickly be given up, if they are not walking in the power of that which they now possess. How often have we seen saints who have had light and departed from it, having even that light taken from them. Such, indeed, may get an easier conscience perhaps, but then it is on a very much lower level.

The "single eye" relates to the state of our desires and affections. Even the common affairs of life may hinder the unqualified spirit of Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearing His word. But the admonition is, " Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness." If our standard be not Christ, the light in us will become darkness. If we have taken for our measure something that is not Christ, and Christ alone, the manner of our judging will be wrong; and the light in us having become darkness, we shall be guided wrong, and mistake our path.

But if the eye be full of Christ, and we judge everything by that light, when we see anything that would not glorify Christ, we say, That will not do for us. The vessel may be small, but it must be wholly for Christ.

May we be walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the divine teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ; contented to walk with Him; desiring no other path: having our eye upon Him, and upon Him only. So that when other objects are put before us, we may be able to say, It will not do for me, for it is not Christ. Oh! may we be simple concerning evil, in a world of evil. May we be so occupied with Christ, that there may be no room for it to come in-not making it our business to judge the evil, but remain simple concerning it. And may Christ be so the one object of my heart and affections, that I may have no dark corner within-the Holy Ghost making Him the center round which every thought and desire of my soul is entwined.

## The Love of Christ

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If I despond, 'tis not for long;  
If weakness bows me, strength again  
Soon lifts me up and makes me strong;  
Death strives with me in vain  
For Christ's unbounded love to me  
Gives hope, strength, immortality.  
And Christ's vast love's forever mine;  
From it I never can be torn:  
Things present, things in coming time,  
By it are overborne.  
Angels nor principalities  
Can sever us in anywise.  
O glorious strength of love divine!  
Since thou art with me in the way,  
All things may like one wave combine  
To make my life their prey.  
Thou wilt but laugh to see it rise,  
And take me to thy paradise.

## Man's Uprightness and God's Salvation

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### Job 33

It is often a long time before a soul that has known something of the graciousness of God is brought, thoroughly and practically in conscience, to bow to the truth of its condition before Him as He reveals it, and so to be cast over, simply and entirely, on grace. But to this, sooner or later, God does bring every soul that has to do with Him. This chapter reveals to us the way in which God brings about this blessed result for man, till then ignorant of Him and of himself. He speaks once and again, but man heeds it not. Then He makes His hand to be felt, as in Psa. 32, and for the same reason-because the soul is keeping silence and refusing to own sin. He lets the light of His holiness shine in and reach the conscience, and the life draws near the grave. But all this is God's own work in grace, to give man the consciousness of what he is before Him, and to put the truth into him; to bring him to be in the true knowledge and acknowledgment of what he, a sinner and a creature, is in the presence of a God of holiness and grace, whom he has despised and neglected. This is the first thing.

Then, secondly, a messenger comes; not to speak of grace in this instance, but of truth. And O, how rare is such an one-"one of a thousand"-to declare unto man his uprightness. And what is man's uprightness but confession? -the only true place a sinner can take before God. But there is uprightness for a sinner even before God; and that is self-judgment in the justifying of God's verdict against him-taking God's part against himself. This the Interpreter of God's ways explains. He explains that the hand of God is on the sinner just in order to this; and that the moment the soul comes to this-the moment it says with David, " I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," there is forgiveness. So here, " he will be gracious to him;" for the controversy is at an end. The sinner leaves himself self-condemned at the mercy of God, And O, what wondrous mercy is now revealed. " I have found a ransom." "Save," says God. He becomes the soul's salvation; and this, too, through a ransom. He finds the ransom; and He says, " Save." He becomes the Redeemer Himself of the soul that repents-that owns His righteousness in the confession of its own utter want of it.

Now mark the blessed result of it all. "He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy." He is brought to God-to God as his Savior, his Friend. The whole state of his soul has been up in question before God in judgment. All has come out. He is in the truth-upright in the unpalliating confession of his utter want of uprightiness. And, then, God is active. He it is who delivers. He says, " Save:" for He had found the ransom; and that, too, ere ever He began this process and exercise. He expected nothing from the sinner to give him a place with Himself: He had found all. But He must strip the sinner of himself. He must stain his fancied self-goodness, that He may fit him for the valuing and accepting - and of grace, too - that which is divine. God wants to have man with Himself in righteousness, so as to enjoy Him in love. But only a divine righteousness can suffice. Creature-righteousness there is none; though man, alas! goes about to establish one of his own. But in God's presence it all turns into filthy rags: his comeliness

turns in him to corruption; and he can only lay his hand on his mouth, and say, "Unclean, unclean!" Thus does God strip off what is of man, that He may clothe him with what is of Himself, even Christ, His Righteousness for sinners.

But we must not forget another point -viz., that if the sinner needs a righteousness, if he needs to be clothed before God, he also, and first, needs a ransom. He is an heir of the pit. He is drawing nigh to the pit. All that is the deepest part. Here, again, Christ comes in. How possibly spare such a vessel of wrath? How let him escape? Here is the answer-" I have found a ransom." " Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." God now frees the man from all that he did and was because of the ransom which He Himself provided, even Jesus, " the propitiation for our sins." The sinner is saved from death because another passes under it in his stead. Herein is love. God provides the Lamb for the sacrifice. Oh I precious ransom! God's own provision for condemned and guilty man drawing nigh to the pit. But now He takes away the filthy garments and clothes him with change of raiment. Now all is changed, and forever. He has come to God, and in His presence all has been out and judged in the conscience; and, Oh, how welcome the pardon in the name of the Blessed One who gave Himself a ransom for our sins! Ah we have but to own our deserving the judgment; He bore it for us on the tree. How sweet such a reprieve; the witness of such divine love, and based on divine holiness and justice. The soul is brought to God: it sees His face with joy: and this is forever. He is to be with Him. He gets a place in and with Jesus. " Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." God grant each of my readers to stand clean and clear in the consciousness by faith of having had the whole question of his everlasting condition all settled by God and before Him; and in the assurance that all his salvation is Jesus: nothing that ever will be in himself or of himself; but that he starts with this divine settlement, which is the foundation of all progress, and which no progress ever can make more perfect; though we shall know its perfection and blessedness increasingly, and be growing in the knowledge of grace and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, a ransom-the real actual bearing of our sins on the tree; then, the true place with God in Christ as our righteousness and our beauty. O, how dear and lovely God becomes then! And

" how our hearts delight to hear Him,

Bid us dwell in safety near Him."

One more remark: the exercises are needful, but they do not deliver; they "bring unto the truth; but nothing that goes on in us, or that comes out of us, can be a ground of deliverance. God delivers through Jesus Christ. He has found a ransom. Faith now welcomes salvation by grace; and says, " To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," be all the praise forever and ever. Amen.

## Mediation, Priesthood, Intercession, Sonship

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Much as may have been written and taught on the subjects presented in the heading of this paper, it will often be found that there is a want of distinctness in the minds of believers, as to their place and application, as they are unfolded in scripture.

The object of this paper is not so much to enter into the nature and results of mediation, priesthood, intercession, and sonship, as to present the place and bearing of each for edification and profit. In attempting this, scripture alone must be our guide. And he who studies scripture most will be most struck with its wondrous perfectness; and at the same time will be most impressed with his own imperfect apprehension of its divine and infinite fullness. Augustine used to say, "Adoro plenitudinem scripturae!" And we, in like sense, may say, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part."

All truth, however, has its place—that of grace, that of privilege, that of responsibility, that which views us as creatures, and that which relates to us as children; that which discloses our position, as risen with Christ, and seated in heavenly places, and that which directs our walk and worship, while here on earth; and all should be sought to be maintained in practical effect.

Nothing can be plainer, from scripture, than that the believer is viewed in different positions and different relationships and aspects, and the truth appropriate to each is to be carefully noted. There is the position of being in the heavenlies in Christ, and also of being upon earth, as to our members. There is the relationship of children, and the responsibility of servants. There is the position of worshippers, and that of witnesses for Christ. There is the place of pilgrimage on earth, and there is the subjection of creatures to God as supreme: while, as to all the springs of our life and blessing, it is said, with marvelous grace, "We are in him, that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God and eternal life."

The idea of mediation, priesthood, or intercession is not connected with the thought of the Church's position as stated in Eph. 2:5, "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ;" except indeed as to result. For however this blessed position be the result and fruit of mediation, &c., what is presented in it is, union in life, and identity of place with Him who is our life. It is a position which is marked and characterized by the position of that blessed One through whose love and excellency, and sorrows, and death, this fruit of the Father's infinite love and grace could alone be ours—could alone be possible it should be ours.

As little can sacrifice, or mediation, or priesthood, be present to the mind in conjunction with the thought of the blessed, wondrous truth of our being "members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones." This is not its place. Here it is the participation of a common life and the union of the members of the body with the head. Any other idea interposed would be like "not holding the head," and would be the introduction, in a figurative sense, of schism into the body.

In sonship also, the same distinctness and separation of ideas exist. The title and privilege of sons presents relationship to God, in the correlative position of Father. Hence it is characterized by Liberty of access, by the spirit of confidence, and, if you please, subjection to the Father's will; but especially the spirit of adoption is that which is essential to it, and characterizes the relationship. It is the result of Christ's whole work in redemption, as it is said, in Gal, 4:4-6, "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons [he here speaks of Gentiles, as before of Jews, when He says, 'that we might,' &c.] God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." Under the law believers were in the position of servants; but it is here stated that they must be redeemed from under the law, in order to receive the adoption of sons, law and sonship being impossible to stand together. The Gentiles being sons of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, receive the Spirit of God's Son, or the spirit of adoption, or sonship, in accordance with their relationship.

The spirit of adoption, then, is associated with sonship, and not law, or mediation, or priesthood. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." As sons of God we are partakers, not only of the effects of Christ's death, but we are brought into the same relationship to the Father, and into fellowship with the Father who gave His Son for us, and into fellowship with the Son, who is our deliverer.

In general, then, it may be said, that mediation is necessary to establish the relation between God and the creature, which sin had interrupted: as it is stated (1 Tim. 2:5), " There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Priesthood and intercession maintain the practical worship of those brought nigh to God.

Mediation presents Christ as accomplishing the grounds of reconciliation between God and man. The very term indicates this. It is one coming between two parties. "A mediator is not a mediator of one." There must be two parties where mediation is at work. This was the case in the giving of the law. " It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." Moses was this mediator; not as accomplishing the conditions of the law, but as receiving it from God and communicating it to the people. " And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord. And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments." (Ex. 24:2,3.) It needs not to dwell here on the mediation and intercession of Moses, after the people had sinned in making the calf (Ex. 32), since, lovely as it is in its place, it only presents the contrast to Christ's mediation and intercession, rather than the type. This may be seen in the expression of Moses, " I will go up unto the Lord: peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin-and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written." This could not be-nor if it could, would it have availed as the basis of the people's forgiveness. Hence, the answer of the Lord, " Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

Moses was the mediator of the law, as passing from the people to God, and from God to the people; and as receiving the law from God, and communicating it to the people. But the law being a dispensation of requirement, no mediator -could bring the parties together. I do not, of course,

speak here of Christ " who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But Christ is no mediator of law; but the mediator of the new covenant, which was in truth a covenant of promises; and He accomplishes all that was essential to make it possible for the promises to take effect. This is what is implied in the passage already quoted from Galatians. "A mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." The contrast here is plainly between law and promise. Law, of necessity, supposes two parties, and allows of a third, as mediator. But promise is restricted to One. " God is one." God gives the promise, and He fulfills the conditions which can alone make it take effect. Hence the force of the expression of Christ, " This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." It is that which gives effect to the new covenant; as the mediator brings the promiser and those to whom the promises are to be accomplished together. Still, it cannot be said that the Church or believers are brought under the formal terms of the new covenant. Their connection is with Christ as the mediator of it, and with His blood, which is the blood of the new covenant. But the new covenant is to be made with Israel, who possessed the old covenant. This is plainly stated in Jeremiah and in the Hebrews, where the new covenant is only introduced to show that the first was old. (See Jer. 31:31-34, and Heb. 8) This is by no means to deprive believers of their rightful portion through grace; but, in truth, simply to enlarge its sphere. For if we speak of promises, it is not said, the promises of the new covenant are ours, as under that covenant, but "ALL the promises of God"-however many and great they may be-" in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." In Christ we inherit them all.

" There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This is much more general in its sense. It presents Christ as the necessary and provided ground of reconciliation between God and men. He is here the daysman of Job, necessary and able to bring both parties together.

The Church of God can only be said to be the subject of mediation in regard to the common condition of sin and distance from God of its individual members, since all " were by nature children of wrath, even as others." But the Church is in the enjoyment of the full effect of Christ's mediation; as in Colossians, (chap. 1:20, 21,) when speaking of God's purpose to reconcile all things to Himself by Jesus, it is immediately added with regard to believers, " You hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight."

Priesthood is always viewed as the medium of worship for an accepted people. Israel, as an earthly people, yet brought near to God, received their priesthood after their redemption from Egypt. However, it only presented the shadows of good things to come. Priesthood cannot be associated with the highest position of the Church as members of Christ's body, however it has to do with the worship of the Church on earth. For if we speak of having " boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," it is plain that both sacrifice and priest must be before the mind, as essentially connected with " the holiest of all." Still, it is in Melchizedec-character, and in the power of an endless life, that the Lord Jesus is priest to believers.

Intercession is based upon priesthood, as we see by Heb. 7:24, 25. " This man, because he continueth ever, hath 411 unchangeable priesthood; wherefore, he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." But it is presented apart, in the question of our security, in Rom. 8:34. " Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God, who also

maketh intercession for us." Moreover, the Holy Ghost in the believer makes intercession, as it is said, Rom. 8:26, "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." And, again, "He maketh intercession for the saints according to God."

There would be a moral incongruity in associating anything but the affections and conduct, which belong to the relationship, with the Church's title of the Bride of Christ. It is plain that, if my heart be occupied with this blessed relationship of the Church toward Christ, I, can only understand how I ought to feel, as an individual member, by having before my mind what is suited to this position, in its purest and truest character, as an earthly position and relationship. In my intercourse too with God in the relationship of a child, my heart is only occupied with the grace and love which have put me into this relationship, and with the character of Him whom I delight to own as Father and God. All truth, again it may be said, has its place; but then, how varied its character and how vast the range of that grace of which it is the perfect but varied expression! And how our hearts need enlargement according to the prayer of the apostle, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

## Mercy

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### Psalm 103 and Ephesians 1

God is steady, unmovable, in His purposes of mercy. Blessing He will give, and give so as to lay the blessing on the heart, and so lay it as that the heart shall enjoy it and give it back to Him in praise.

In this and the two following psalms we get millennial blessedness, and then the burst of praise from the earth which follows. When God has done it, there is nothing to do but to light the censer of praise, and waft it back to the God who has done it. David could praise, not of David, but of God. I have done nothing, he would say, nothing but failure; but THOU hast done it all. " Bless the Lord, O, my soul." When we can speak of nothing else, we can speak of God.

Is not this the thought running through this psalm, that the poor sinner, entirely ruined, has found God as the God of mercy; that a man who had done every evil, even murder, has so tasted of the springs that are in the God of mercy, that he can rejoice in it as the blessing rushes into his soul? And cannot each of us say, This God of mercy, this mercy in God suits me?

There have been many dispensations, but never did God give blessing under any of them save by mercy. No power -but by the Spirit of God, no way of mercy but this, "the Seed of the woman." [But mark the contrast in the character of the blessing of the saints in the heavenlies.]

In Ephesians the 1st, the apostle begins with God. It is a great thing to say my sins are forgiven me, but it is more to say, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has planned such a scheme of mercy, as that He is glorified by His pardon. In Psa. 103, I get mercy dropping down from above. In Eph., I get the source and beginning of it. Let me ask you, where does your gospel begin? This is in heaven. It is a different thing to be like David, knowing how mercy suits me when I have failed in everything, from being like Paul, who knew that he was just the person suited for God. "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering," &c. The reason why saints are not more happy and settled in soul, is because they look upon God as dealing out His mercy to them on earth, instead of seeing God is in heaven seeking those in whom He can display His mercy. I have not only found mercy as a ruined sinner, but I have found God, who is rich in mercy, and who says that I as a sinner suit Him. God wants sinners, and I am one in whom He may show forth His mercy.

How comes it that you cannot speak well of God? A worldly man cannot; the christian can. But the disciple says, Alas! how sadly I fail in doing it. The reason of this is that you have not got to the end of yourself. You have not come to this point, to know that God does not think you worth speaking about. That is what you want to make you speak well of God.

We want to be grounded in God's mercy. The leading thought in scripture is mercy. It is in mercy He has plucked brands out of the burning; and when He wanted one to send among the Gentiles to take his special revelation, He chose one who had been a blasphemer and injurious; and when

He would send to the hard and stiff-necked Jews, He took the one who was ever dashing on in his impetuosity-blundering, cursing, and then denying his Lord. What a school had these two passed through to fit them to set forth the suitability of poor lost ones to display God's Mercy!

I do hold that the saints are bound to sing. A man in the temple of Jerusalem set as a singer, what else had he to do but to sing? He might get out of tune, but he was bound to sing. If you will let self and circumstances come in, you will never sing; but if occupied with God and Christ, you will never be out of tune. The more broken in heart and spirit I am, the more deep cause I have to sing of Him. Of course we must not express feelings we have not; that would be hypocrisy; but if I sing of what Christ has done, I may sing from the bottom of the pit.

## The Name of Jesus

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I own the name of Jesus,  
Let others it despise;  
The blessed name of Jesus  
Above all else I prize.  
I bear the name of Jesus-  
Profess Him as my Lord;  
Acknowledge Him my Savior-  
Alone beloved, adored.  
I love the name of Jesus,  
Whate'er the cross I bear;  
I find my joy and solace,  
And all I wish for, there.  
I prize the name of Jesus,  
The treasure of my soul;  
The sum of all my riches,  
My joy unspeakable.  
Yes blessed, precious Jesus,  
My heart e'er turns to thee;  
Come whatsoe'er thou wilt,  
Thy name my all shall be!  
And, O! the name of Jesus,  
Shall be my deathless song,  
When in the realms of glory  
I join the ransomed throng.

## Nicodemus

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There was an interval between the bite of the fiery serpent and the death of its victim. That interval was granted in grace, that the Israelite who had been bitten might look on the serpent of brass and live.

This interval may have been longer in some cases than in others. We cannot say. But we know it is so in the analogy or allegory. Many sinners have their lives lengthened out in mercy, that if not in youth, yet in age, they may look to Jesus and live. The tower in Siloam did not fall on all who were then dwelling in. Jerusalem; the survivors are warned to use the longer time in mercy afforded them.

So, some of the bitten Israelites may have looked more immediately and at once, after the bite, than others. Again, we cannot say. But we know it is so in the analogy. Some of us have been slow to look to Jesus, even after we have felt the venom of the old serpent's bite: others make short work of it-as is the common case under the operation of God upon souls at this present time. As one has lately said, " What in ordinary cases is spread over months and years, is now compressed into an instant. Men comprehend at once that they are lost, and that the Lord is all they need. It is only a look-a cry-an act of reliance-and the day dawns upon them, and their peace begins to flow as a river."

It is not, however, with Nicodemus after this manner. Nicodemus was long ere he looked. The Lord lets him know in the early time of John 3, that he had been bitten, and must look, but he does not look till the distant day of John 19.

According to cases more generally recorded in the Gospels, the entrance of souls into light and liberty was rapid. Zaccheus, and the dying thief, the Samaritan woman, Peter, and Matthew the publican took but little time to accomplish the journey from darkness to light. We have, however, instances of a slow and gradual progress also.

The spirit of Nathanael may have been under the shade and over-casting of the fig-tree for years. Lydia may have resorted with a religious but unsettled soul to " the place where prayer was wont to be made," again and again; and Cornelius may have had his fasts, and devotions, and prayers, in long succession. We cannot say; all this may have been so under pressure of soul-trouble. But we can say, (for it is marked under our eye,) that the journey which Nicodemus took was but tardy and lengthened.

He was among those in Jerusalem who had been attracted by the miracles which the Lord was working. (John 2:23;3. 2.) This attraction was felt by him. But there was, I am sure, another feeling known to him. He was uneasy in his soul. This separated him. I do not say that this uneasiness was the commanding affection. I do not believe it was. Had it been so, he would not have come to the Lord as an inquirer after knowledge merely. When conviction was the commanding thing in the soul of Peter, he fell down before Jesus. This did not Nicodemus. Still, I doubt not, light, which disturbs the easy sleep of nature, had penetrated his spirit. Two facts witness this to me-his taking

a solitary journey to Christ, apart from the multitude who, like him, had been attracted by the miracles; and his lingering with the Lord, though He had answered him so strangely and so quickly; unlike the people in chap. vi., who leave Him when His words do not suit them; and unlike his brother Pharisees in chap. viii., who go out from Him at once when His words convict them.

Thus it begins with Nicodemus, I believe. Conviction has not become the commanding affection in his soul, again I grant. Perhaps some of us are scarcely aware that it has ever been so with us, though we doubt not the truth of our being quickened. But his conscience has been disturbed; and such an one as this—an inquirer after truth—one attracted by the miracles, and one carrying some soul-trouble about with him, now comes into the presence of Christ.

And sure I also am, it was this uneasiness, and not his being attracted by the miracles, that interested the Lord. To the people of the city who had been alike attracted, Jesus would not commit Himself, as we read, 2:24. For a miracle is not the proper, immediate ground of faith, such faith as the Spirit works, and as saves the soul. A miracle, like a book on the evidences, may draw attention, and thus be the remote cause of faith. But the faith that saves the soul makes such acquaintance with Christ as a convicted conscience leads to. The fragments of convicted hearts and the answer which grace makes to them, in other words, our need and Christ's fullness, are the links of eternal fellowship.

And in this gospel by St. John, where only we get any notice of Nicodemus, we specially see this. The Lord refuses to be received save as the Friend of sinners, This is strongly expressed, very strongly. The multitude would have had Him display Himself, and so would His brethren. (Chapter 2:7) The multitude would have made Him a king, the Pharisees a judge. (Chapter 6; 8.) Nicodemus treated Him as a teacher, a revealer of heavenly secrets. But these apprehensions of Him were a trouble to Him. He was weary to bear them. He resents them earnestly. His reply to His mother, the shortness with which He turns upon Nicodemus, His quick retreat from the multitude who would have put the crown upon His head, His reply to His brethren, His action when challenged by the Pharisees to sit as judge upon the sinner; all these tell us of the entire alienation of His spirit from such apprehensions of Him, or such approaches to Him. So that we may indeed assure ourselves, it was none of these or such like, but uneasiness of soul, feeble as that may have been, which engaged the regard of the Lord at this time, and kept him in discourse with him.

But Nicodemus leaves the Lord on this occasion without looking where the Lord had guided his eye. He has not yet so felt the bite of the serpent as to look to the pole. That is most sure. Some good distance of time must have passed between the first and the second occasion on which we see Nicodemus. He had carried his uneasiness of soul with him all through this interval, I doubt not. But now, in chap. 7, he has made but little advance—he is still of the Pharisees, one, moreover, of that council of Pharisees who had sent officers to take the Lord by force. But, still, he who had before separated himself, as we saw, from the multitude in Jerusalem by seeking Jesus in solitude, soon separates himself from his brother Pharisees by pleading for the ends of justice in the behalf of Jesus.

This may, perhaps, be progress, but it is surely slow. The cords which were drawing him to the Lord were weak. We track the path of a lingering, slow-paced traveler, and most surely there has been no look at the uplifted serpent yet.

There is again a long interval between the second and third sight we get of him, as there had been between the first and second. But now, when we see him for the third and last time, his soul has advanced indeed; as I judge, I may say, with all certainty.

The same evangelist, John, who alone notices Nicodemus, says in chap. 12, "among the rulers also many believed on Him, (Jesus,) but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." Nicodemus may have been one of these rulers. He is called by the same name, *αρχων*. (See chap. 3:1; 12:42.) But now, in chap. 19, he takes a place apart from his fellow-rulers, and does so openly-nay, from the whole body of the Jews, rulers, priests, Pharisees, multitude, all orders and estates of the nation. He allies himself with the Lord in a moment of some of His very deepest humiliation; nay, he and his companion, Joseph of Arimathea, stand, as with God Himself, in relation to the Crucified One. God will presently provide that blessed Sufferer with a triumphant, glorious resurrection, they provide Him now with a tomb and grave-clothes, and their spices now perfume that sepulcher which ere long divine power will rend asunder.

Surely we may say, Nicodemus has now, in spirit as well as in act, reached the cross. Is he not in the place at that moment chiefest in God's eye on the face of the whole earth? When I see him there, and all the disciples fled away and gone, I know not whether I cannot say, "the last are first;" the timid Joseph and the slow-paced Nicodemus are now before the earnest Peter and the loving John. I know not, I say, whether I have not warrant to say as much as that. But this I know and say again, Joseph and Nicodemus are at that moment occupying the spot of chiefest attraction with God, and doing the very highest and most honorable service which could then have been rendered to Him. They are at the cross, taking down the body of Jesus, and fulfilling that word of the prophet who was anticipating their very act of that moment-"with the rich in his death." (Isa. 53) They were owning the Crucified One in the face of the whole world. They were in the place where a sinner first meets a Savior. They were looking to Him whom sin had just pierced. Nicodemus now stands on the very spot to which the Lord, at the earliest moment, had pointed him. He has now, at last, gained that place. He is at the foot of the pole on which the true Brazen Serpent had been lifted. And he is, in spirit, one with all the other saved ones in this precious Gospel, to whom Jesus "committed Himself," Andrew, and Peter, and Philip, and Nathanael, and the Samaritan, and the Adulteress, and the Blind Beggar. He has changed company, indeed, now. This is no longer a weak and partial separation; Nicodemus is in a new world, which redemption has formed and planted, and where sinners saved have their new being. He is now "born again," as his Lord told him at the first he must be. It is no longer the travail, but the birth. It is indeed, I feel it, a happy thing to delineate the path of this elect one of God. He has now made the journey of all the elect, the journey from darkness to light. He has been a slow-paced traveler. That is true. But there is comfort in turning to this Israelite in the midst of the busy camp in the wilderness, and watch him thus for so long a time struggling, as it were, with the bite of the fiery serpent, and still not looking to the pole. There is comfort in tracking the lingering, lazy footsteps of this man on the road to God, amid the brilliant speedy journeyings of those more vivid, earnest spirits which gladden the pages of St. John. He creeps along among them, and the eye, more attracted by them, almost consents to lose sight of him. But grace did not lose sight of him. It rather abounds in setting at last the slow-paced Nicodemus in company with the liveliest of them.

"O to grace, how great a debtor,

Daily I'm constrained to be,  
May that grace, Lord, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee."

Ah, as once it bound and kept the lingering heart of this man of the Pharisees, this ruler of the Jews.

What wonderful moral variety, what lights and shades of character, not merely in broader outline, but in more minute and delicate touches, do the illustrations of Scripture afford us! There are moral glories in the Book, and that in abundance; but surely there are moral wonders also—paths which, for their elevation, none but the Spirit of God could reach; and others which, for their obscurity or intricacy, none but the same Spirit could discover and follow.

Surely we are invited by the evangelist to gather up those fragments which thus lie in the harvest-field of his gospel. They are but fragments, it is true; but they are not to be lost. There is something of bread-corn for the nourishment of the soul in them, though we may gather but one basketful.

Can we gather this one basketful? If we have delineated the path of this saint of God, can we read the moral of his story?

It is, I own, the creeping progress of this slow-paced traveler, in the very thick and midst of the earnest and vivid histories which fill the pages of St. John, which I chiefly delight to contemplate. There is such comfort in it for some of us, who know the sluggishness of our own souls, in comparison with much that one sees all around at present. For truly it is an earnest, vivid thing, again I say, which one sees around us at this moment. The present work of God with souls is very much of that character. The journey from darkness to light is rapidly performed—and we are conscious that we are breathing the atmosphere of St. John's gospel. The Lord is, as it were, acting on His own models, and taking His first impressions as the order and standard of those which may be among His last. Indeed, the very earliest samples of faith and of divine workmanship in the soul, were of the same character. Adam and Eve, and Abel give witness of earnest, simple, unquestioning, unlingering faith. And precious are such specimens of the way of the power of God. But to find among them, as we have said, a sluggish traveler who had, it may be, but half a heart for the journey, is relief to some of us; and we accept it among the provisions and stores of His boundless riches of grace. And, therefore, we will not overlook Nicodemus.

But, then, there is admonition as well as comfort. I grant it, indeed. This slow-heartedness is not of God, but of ourselves. The grace that meets it, and blesses in spite of it, is of God; the temper that calls forth that grace, is ours.

The Jesus who has now, as we have seen, dealt with Nicodemus and blessed him, is the Jehovah who, of old, dealt with Gideon. Gideon was a slow-hearted man also. God (to speak as men speak) found it hard to win the confidence of that man of Abiezer. Again and again the heart of Gideon retired. Mistrust of God filled his spirit. But God bore with him, went on with him, and rebuked him in the exercise of His grace, until He prevailed over nature.

He heaped the coal of fire on the head, and consumed these suspicions of His goodness. In an eminent manner, God's " gentleness " made Gideon " great." And so now. Nicodemus has been another slow-hearted man; but Jesus, the God of Gideon, has borne with him and conducted him into the place of blessing-the new world where salvation shines.

Deborah and Samson, in those early days of Gideon, had not been slow-hearted like Gideon, as we have already observed. Andrew and the Samaritan woman had not been slow-hearted like Nicodemus in these days of St. John. But the slow-hearted and the ready-hearted are alike in blessing. As the feeble faith and the strong faith; the faith that can only say, " if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us;" and the faith that without asking leave or making apology, breaks up the roof of the house to reach the Lord, are alike answered. The small and the great, as we read, are together before Him: the thirtyfold, the sixtyfold, the hundredfold are, each of them, owned by Him.

Wonderful! What a witness to us of God! Not, however, that Jehovah did not go on with earnest Deborah more in full fellowship than with reluctant Barak. Not that Jesus did not more delight in the boldness of the centurion's faith, than in the weakness of the leper's. And not but that every servant shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor, and they who sow sparingly shall reap sparingly; and they who sow bountifully shall reap bountifully. Still, as we read the stories of Gideon and of Nicodemus, we surely see that blessing closes them. But withal, beloved, do we praise this slow-heartedness? We praise it not. It has a root of evil in the heart, we may be sure.

The fear of man wrought it in both Gideon and Nicodemus.

The love of present possessions wrought it in the rich young ruler. He was uneasy, like Nicodemus, and he would fain have known the rest of Jesus. But the love of what he possessed kept him out, of it

And what was the slow-heartedness of the two disciples that were going to Emmaus, or, indeed of all-apostles and Galilean women together-touching the resurrection? Why this flocking to the empty sepulcher? Had Christ, in their thoughts, no strength equal to the rising from the dead, or had God no love equal to the giving sinners that pledge of their redemption? Why did it appear a thing incredible with them, that God should raise the dead? Whatever form this unbelief may have taken in their hearts, it involved unworthy thoughts of God; as the apostle tells us in 1 Cor. 15 And is not that an evil root? " I speak this to your shame," says the apostle. And surely we will not give this slowness of heart, be it found in ourselves, or where it may, anything but a bad character. But surely this magnifies that grace that blesses in spite of it.

The soul hesitates. It refuses to be comforted. We linger and draw back. Why? We are occupied with ourselves. Is that to be commended, after we have been told about the pole in the wilderness? True humbleness forgets self. " It is perfect humility," says one, "to have every thought of Christ, and not one of ourselves." Some of us know too well the workings of a legal self-righteous mind. But we will not, we do not, speak well of it. Faith in silence ascends to God, and dwells in His light. Faith in Joshua, allowed in silence even the miter to be set on his head. Faith in the prodigal, in silence sat at the table, ate of the calf, wore the robe, and listened to the music. As faith in Adam at the beginning, came forth in silence and in nakedness, to be clothed and blessed.

## Notes on Colossians

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I desire to send you a few remarks from time to time, as the Lord may enable me, on the Epistle to the Colossians; chiefly for the help of the young who have recently been brought, in His great mercy, to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two things in this Epistle make it especially precious to such. The first is the way in which it so fully reveals the glory of His Person, whether as Son of the Father's love, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells, or as Creator, and Redeemer, and Head of His body, the Church. The Second thing is the way in which it unfolds "the mystery" for the joy and consolation of the saints -even Christ in them the hope of glory.

These are the two great subjects set before our hearts by the Holy Ghost in this precious Epistle; and what can be more strengthening or gladdening than to have the eye and heart filled with the glory of Jesus and to have the joy and assurance of our intimate union with Him made good in our souls by the Holy Ghost. To walk in the light of His risen glory and in the consciousness of our individual interest in His love is the great requirement in these evil days. Nothing else will give courage to confess Him before men; and this alone will deliver from all the snares of Satan, whether of worldliness on the one hand, or of religion on the other, which is not after Christ.

These things will come before us, if the Lord will, by and by: meantime, let us follow the course of the Epistle from the beginning.

In the first two verses we have the salutation of the Apostle, and in the next three his thanksgiving on their behalf. He addresses them as Christ's apostle, clothed with the authority of His name, and charged with the communication of His grace. Moreover, God had set him apart to this service. In the end of the chapter the Apostle tells of a double ministry entrusted to him as the vessel of the grace of God; first, a ministry for the proclamation of the gospel to sinners; and second, a ministry for the Church, to make known to the saints the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is in the exercise of this latter ministry that he writes this Epistle. It is to bring the hearts of the saints into the assured knowledge and enjoyment of their place and portion in Christ so as to walk in peaceful communion with Him until He shall appear. This ministry he fulfills in the name, and as the Apostle of, Jesus Christ. Thus the whole Epistle flows directly from Christ through His chosen Apostle.

It is to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ he writes, and, as we have seen, on the part of Christ. They were "in Christ," the grand center of the new creation; holy and brethren in Him. Then he ministers the sweet stream of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus was parted from His disciples in the act of blessing them, so here the apostle of Christ begins his epistle to the Colossians, before entering on anything else, by saluting them with the grace or unmingled favor of the Father and the Son, of which they were ever the objects, being in Christ, and with the peace which is the fruit of this favor.

Next we get his thanksgiving. He thanked God, even the Father of "Our Lord Jesus Christ," praying always for them, for the hope laid up for them in Heaven. Here we see how Paul identified

himself with the interests of Heaven. He had heard of the faith and love of these Colossians, and his heart at once turned to God in thanksgiving and prayers; thanksgiving that He had linked with heaven this fresh company of believers, and that He had done it. And note well, that it was not what they were delivered from that here occurs to him, though he does not forget that, as we see lower down; nor is it what was wrought in them, blessed as that was; but it is what they were called to—that bright and blessed portion in heaven—the hope laid up for them there. Thus he would evidently fill their minds with what they were going to; and in his own sense of its exceeding excellency and glory, he thanks God on their behalf as heirs of such an inheritance.

This is a very important point. For there is a great tendency, in the first joy of faith and fervor of feeling, to be occupied with the joy and with the feeling; and when afterward trials and exercises of heart and conscience have to be passed through, to be occupied with them, or with what will give present deliverance and help, and to forget the bright and blessed hope laid up for us in heaven—the place of rest and glory with Himself, which Jesus is gone to prepare. But how can I journey on to Canaan through the trials and exercises of the wilderness if my heart has lost the sense of the blessedness of the Canaan I am going to? We are redeemed, not for the wilderness, but for Canaan; we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And when the glory of God is indeed our joy, we can add, "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." For then we know and experience that these very tribulations are all made to work for our good, and to further us on our way. For tribulation worketh patience. It frees us from the restlessness of our own will, which would turn aside, and delivers us, besides, from the fear of what man can do to us. We learn to trust in God. We learn, moreover, how little we can be the authors of our own blessing, and we count more and more on the constant watchfulness and love, and care of a Father in heaven. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. We know that we are in these tribulations because the objects of His love, the ransomed ones of His grace from the fire that shall never be quenched. And then, besides, we are on our way to God. Thus having the end in view enables us to confess that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and it brightens with hope every step of the way. Otherwise we get weary, becoming faint in our minds. But if living by faith in the midst of things that are unseen and eternal the inward man is renewed day by day, and that, too, at the very time that the outward man is perishing and falling into decay.

But we now come to a third point, and that is—the ground of this thanksgiving on the behalf of these Colossians.

How could the apostle give thanks so assuredly on their behalf, having never seen them? Verse 4 tells us. It was because he had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and of their love to all the saints. These were the grand distinguishing features and characteristics of the divine life in man. And these being of God, he well knew that all who possessed them were bound up forever in the bundle of life with the Lord Jesus Christ, and that where He was there should they be also. These were the grand essentials. In Christ Jesus nothing avails but "faith which worketh by love." First, faith, which came to Jesus with all its load of sin and unworthiness because it had no where else to go, and because it saw a love and a holiness in Him which received sinners and made Him their companion and their friend. And then love which, having Him for its object, necessarily had all who were His. Faith not only thus comes to Jesus at the first, but it binds the soul to Him as risen, and is ever receiving of His fullness. And love, having seen the saints as the precious ones of His heart, enfolds them forever in its bosom with a most tender affection. They are dear to Him. This is

the motive of love, and it never faileth. It clothes with divine comeliness all the objects of His grace. And what it does to them it does as unto Him; and great is its reward.

(To be continued)

Notes on Colossians

Chapter 1:5

In the previous verses we had three points brought before us; first, the apostle's salutation, in which he regards, the saints as the objects of the present favor of the Father, and of the peace which He gives. Happy position! secured to us forever in Christ. And sweet it is thus to be able to view the saints at all times, whatever their practical condition, may be, as dear to God, the excellent of the earth, whose present peace and blessing He seeks, even as He has secured it for us forever in Christ. In fellowship with these thoughts of God, the apostle greets them with grace and peace from God their Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, secondly, we had his thanksgiving for the hope laid up for them in heaven. Heaven was near to his thoughts. Jesus was there. He had entered in, and He was preparing a place for them. He is to come again to take us to Himself, that we may be forever with Him. And when He shall be Manifested then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory. This latter, perhaps, was more especially the hope here before him; Christ in them " the hope of glory." What rest of heart the apostle had in contemplating this issue of Christ's travail on their behalf, their being with Him forever in heaven! Many an exercise he had on their behalf even as to the very condition they were in at the time he was writing to them; they had lost the sense of their place with their risen Head; at any rate it had become much enfeebled, and with the enfeebling of this all else became enfeebled too. He had great agony for them; and this was Christ's Spirit yearning in him over them for their deliverance, and for their entrance in living power into the joy and comfort of the mystery. But when he turned to heaven all was peace; he could give thanks to the Father for the portion He had laid up for them there. Christ was there. The Head was there, and with Him every one of the members should appear in glory.

Then, thirdly, in the 4th verse, we had the ground of this thanksgiving as far as they were concerned - even their faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints. Grace had wrought in them already, and he at once connects it with glory.

In the close of this 5th verse and in the next, a new subject comes before him; the gospel, " the word of the truth of the gospel." In connection with this he makes three statements, each of them weighty and important, as indeed every word of God is.

First, he connects the hope laid up for them in heaven with the word of the truth of the gospel. The gospel, the good tidings of grace, had wrapped up in it also good tidings of glory. It was in the word of the truth of the gospel that they had heard of the hope laid up for them in heaven. Such was the range and scope of the gospel at least which they had heard: it was God's good news not only of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of His Son, but of eternal blessedness with Him in heaven.

How could it be otherwise? Christ was in heaven, and we are redeemed to be with Him. The cross put Him in glory, and it puts all who trust in Him, too. Blessed is it to know what we are delivered

from the wages of sin—eternal separation from God, who is love, the fountain of all goodness and joy; and this, too, as the expression of His everlasting displeasure. But how much more blessed to know that His perfect love did not spare His own Son, not only that I might not perish, but that I might know Him and be with Himself forever. Jesus was forsaken for us, that we might be forever brought nigh. This gives the heart an object as well as perfect peace to the conscience. It delivers also from this present evil world; the brightness and blessedness of that One discovering the true condition of this one—far from God and in bondage to Satan, and under wrath because having rejected Jesus. The word of the truth of the gospel reveals all this—the true condition of man and his world; the perfect grace of God which has wrought in the cross for us, and which had wrought in them, by the gospel, giving them a place even now with Him who bore it for them, and the hope of being with Him forever in heaven.' It was the word of the truth of the gospel, and on it they might rely with confidence. Man and his glory was passing away, but the word of the Lord should endure forever. 'And this was the word which by the gospel was preached unto them.

What firmness of step, and what buoyancy of spirit this heavenly hope gives to him who has it in passing through this world! Then we realize that we are not of it, and that we are on our way to God.

A second characteristic of the gospel was its universality. It had reached them, and was amongst them, as, indeed, it was in all the world. It was no mere Jewish good tidings; it was for man. Offenses abounded among the Jews; but where sin abounded, a far wider thing, there grace did much more abound.

Then, thirdly, it was bringing forth fruit in all the world and amongst them, too. It was gathering souls to God through Christ wherever it went; but besides, it was bringing forth fruit in those who were gathered. This last point is plainly implied in the clause which follows: "since the day ye heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth." Ever since it was the power of fruit-bearing, as at the first it was the seed of eternal life. This is a very important point, and one we are apt often to forget. The seed that fell into the good ground brought forth fruit; some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold. We have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God. This is the simple natural result of union with Jesus risen. And the grace of God, when known in truth, sets us thus before God in Christ, the fruits of which union we are to manifest down here upon the earth. We are to walk in newness of life, i.e., of existence. In order to this we must abide in Him. But when simply holding the Head everything is fruit, fruit unto God.

What a place of honor and glory this is—of being the living channels of the affections and virtues of Christ hid in God here in this world! (O, that we esteemed it more.) Thus it is we adorn the doctrine of God our Savior, by manifesting in this world of sin and in the trying circumstances of daily life, not what flesh is, but what Christ is; our heart feeding upon His love, whilst we lean upon His arm and are guided by His eye. What interest He takes in our being fruitful, that His Father may be glorified! Will He fail us in the hour of need? He lets us come into it just that we may prove how abundant are His resources to make us victors over all the power of the enemy.

May He keep us near to Himself that we may be happy in His love, and so be strong to live for Him.

(Continued from page 24.4.)

( To be continued.)

## Notes on Psalm 1

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"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

This psalm describes a man blessed of the Lord—a happy man—a man whom God can approve. He is distinguished by an entire freedom from the taint of evil in every form. He has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor has he sat down in the seat of the scornful. " But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law cloth he meditate day and night."

The purity of the law meets a perfect reflection in his heart; its unbending strictness brings no cloud of condemnation over his soul—it is his delight; his unwearying study; his constant solace; his meditation day and night.

It is personal righteousness which is here described; personal, absolute freedom from evil or sin, and personal delight in righteousness or holiness. " The righteous Lord loveth righteousness:" and this psalm describes the man whom He can approve. It is quite true, that a believer standing in the power of the Lord's grace might, in a very qualified degree, answer to the description of this psalm; and David, or an Old Testament saint, might, in a very qualified sense, appropriate the language; but the psalm goes much further than this, and contemplates the man, who in Psa. 40 says, " Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Verse 3 presents a picture of the unclouded prosperity that belongs to this man. He is planted by the unfailing springs of life and joy; his actions and ways are like the perfected fruit of a tree in its proper season; no blight nor symptom of decay is ever to touch his beautiful form—" his leaf shall not fade;" and perfection is to mark his every purpose and act—" whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

The reverse of all this has hitherto been manifested, in Christ, to the eye of man; but His resurrection from the dead, and His exaltation to the right hand of God, give the sure pledge to faith that all the blessedness that belongs to righteousness shall one day be seen to be His. Blessed is it to think that this Man of Sorrows shall be the inheritor of all this joy, and that the principles of God's righteousness will assuredly at last be universally applied.

How melancholy, in the contrast, is the portion of the ungodly! " The ungodly are not so." In the judgment they will not stand; and in the congregation of the righteous—for there will be a congregation of the righteous—sinners will not be gathered; but the very " WAY of the wicked shall perish."

## Notes of a Lecture on Numbers 15

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This chapter comes in in a very peculiar manner.

The children of Israel had despised the pleasant land; they had quarreled with the manna, the food given to them by God; (chap. 11;) they had slighted the promises of God concerning the good land, though an earnest was brought to them by the spies; (chap. 13, 14;) and in chap. 16 we find them in open rebellion and, apostasy, falling away in the gainsaying of Korah. This was not merely failure, which brought on chastisement, but open rebellion, and God cut them off in their sins. It is between these two things this fifteenth chapter comes in.

The Book of Numbers is the putting God's people in their place and the order of their journeys. They had departed from the mount of the Lord a three days' journey. (Chapter 10:33.) This was the first time of their starting, and then we find the Lord goes out of His place in grace. The people ought have been round about taking care of the Lord, but "the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them." Moses wished Hobab to be to them "instead of eyes;" but God says, I will be as eyes to you; and "the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them." In this we see the actings of extraordinary grace. "It came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

The next step, as we see in chap. 11, is the working of unbelief. While God is going before them the people complain; and then come out all the various forms and progress of unbelief. In chap. 14 we see they had to wander in the wilderness forty years. Chapter 15 gives what they were to do in the land. And chap. 16 the open rebellion and apostasy closing in the forms of unbelief. But before this apostate character is developed, chap. 15 comes in, full of loveliness. Rebellion had arisen to a great height, for not only had they despised the pleasant land, but the spies had brought up an evil report of the land. Caleb and Joshua proved their faithfulness in remonstrating with the people, telling them that the Lord could bring them in, when this awful rebellion broke out, and "all the congregation bade stone them with stones." Then, consequently, "the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." God interfered immediately, and tells Moses, "I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." Then Moses interferences, and here we see the devotedness of his character coming out in intercession. And then God says, "I have pardoned according to thy word," but yet I will chastise them; and to the people he says, "as ye have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you." You shall get the thing your wretched flesh desired, for you shall die in this wilderness. (Chapter 14:28, 29.)

But in the midst of all this comes in chap. 15, in which we learn that God goes on in His purpose as calmly and quietly as if there never had been the despising of the land. For, in the second verse, He says, "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you." His purpose is as settled as if there had been no rebellion at all. He speaks in the calmness of His own purpose. After telling them of chastisement, He says, Ye shall come into the land; it is settled with

me; I go on in the steadfastness of my own counsels. "I am the Lord your God." It is blessed to see, not that the Lord will not chastise in the way of government, for He says, "As truly as I live, as ye have spoken in mine ears so will I do to you." But that He never relinquishes His purpose, though He deals with the heart according to its unbelief. We see this in verse 45. The Amalekites and Canaanites discomfited them to Hormah, and Hormah means destruction; but then the heart can always return to the steadfastness of His purpose, which remains in its very nature the same. We see joy shining out in this chapter; a provision for grace and warning. He tells them what to do in the land. "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you, and will make an offering by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savor unto the Lord, of the herd, or of the flock; then shall he that offereth his offering unto the Lord bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil. And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb. Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare for a meat offering two tenth deals of flour mingled with the third part of an hin of oil. And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third part of an hin of wine, for a sweet savor unto the Lord. And when thou preparest a bullock for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the Lord: then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth deals of flour mingled with half an hin of oil. And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord." 'Your rebellions would have sinned away the land, but I have given it you. It is not a sin-offering you are to bring but a burnt-offering. You are accepted, and are going to worship me there.'

Christ is represented by the burnt-offering - the voluntary offering up of His life to God as a sweet savor. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." When divine love comes down here it always returns up in the character of self-sacrifice. God acts in love; Christ walked in love; and divine love acting in man offers itself a sweet savor unto God.

Then they were to bring oil and wine. The oil showing the joy and gladness, and wine the fellowship in communion. When you have got rest in God, and worship comes out, it must be in joy and gladness of heart and fellowship with God. And He would have us return to Him thus. But we shall not be able to be "followers of God" unless we dwell in this comfort and joy of His thoughts about us.

And further, observe God's actings and givings. "According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to every one according to their number. All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner, in offering an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance forever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you." See how "the branches run over the wall," in God's- heart running out, as in verse 14, to the stranger. Christ said He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but when the poor Gentile woman appealed to the nature of God as a giver, he could not deny her, because He could not deny what

He was. Here God is saying, I cannot have a person in my land, and not a worshipper, not enjoying God. All must be happy there. If any person is in the land of God, he must know the mind and temper of the God of the land. There is one law for all. God will be Himself, and make Himself known. While this is the case in the land, there would be offering connected with evil and failure, as in ver. 22. God says, There may be failure, therefore I will make provision for sin in grace. And here comes in the sin-offering-that when man fails, God may still maintain and keep him in the place of blessing.

Verse 30. The soul that sinneth presumptuously, (the case of one who has no life in him,) he shall be cut off-- " his iniquity shall be upon him." The presumptuous sinner under the law was to be treated with the rigor of the law. No mercy; but " stone him with stones without the camp." Being brought into this condition, provision is made for keeping them mindful of where they were brought. Upon the fringes was to be "a riband of blue," signifying a heavenly character. (Ver. 38.) The fringes of the garments reached to the earth, and might come in contact with defilement. God's precepts and directions alone can keep us walking after Him. Jesus said, " Man shall not live by bread alone." The precepts of the gospel are like fringes to our garments, attached to those things where sin can touch us. And in this way man does not live by bread alone, " but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God:" living every instant so as not to be touched by Satan. The "riband of blue," the heavenly mind that calls the precepts and words of the Lord to remembrance. If I were spiritual, and walking in fellowship with God, I should not need precepts; but,

in my folly and fleshliness, I need God's precepts to keep my soul mindful of Him. Satan said, " Command that these stones be made bread." There was no harm in satisfying hunger; but Jesus came to do the will of His Father; and this would have been doing His own will. If we walk in a godly manner in the details of life, in the character of blue, that is, heavenly, we shall remember the words of our Lord, and not do our own wills. All this is the provision of grace in the land. It is sweet to find at the close of all this failure, God returning to bless-giving out His own thoughts of peace, and not of evil, as nothing can weaken or enfeeble the blessedness of God's thoughts concerning us: and therefore closes it by saying; " I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

## Power and Nearness

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### 1 Kings 19

Demonstration of power never invigorates the soul, unless it is connected with private communion with the Lord, and then, it is the communion and not the power which confers the blessing. The power is to give effect to service, but is always followed by depression and disheartenment unless the soul is kept in secret nearness to the Lord. We learn this from the chapter before us. Here was Elijah after witnessing one of the most marvelous demonstrations of the Lord's power on earth: "The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench:" besides this, there was also a great rain in answer to Elijah's prayer. So that there had been a double manifestation of God's power; one to corroborate the mission of His servant, the other to bless His people. Yet, after all, we find in the next paragraph, that Elijah is so disheartened and fearful, that he fled for his life a day's journey into the wilderness, and requested for himself that he might die! In this state, the angel of the Lord -comes to him to prepare him for a journey to the Mount Horeb; and then, having eaten nothing for forty days and forty nights, he is instructed that the Lord (as for him) is not in the great and strong wind which rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in "the still small voice." He is in that secret, invisible, noiseless communication which "no man knoweth but he which receiveth it." When Elijah heard the latter, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. His soul responds to the unmistakable voice of the Lord; the sheep knows His voice. The manifestations of His mighty power had no such effect on him. And this is our experience if we have but retirement and abstraction enough from nature to observe it. The soul must be in a listening attitude in order to distinguish (if I may so say) the peculiar notes of the voice of the Lord. The listening attitude is morally typified by Elijah's position at the mount of God; alone, and without food; subsisting only on God's provision for him. When nature clogs, and the world confuses, we shall not easily distinguish the "still small voice" from the voice of His wonders; nor, on the other hand, will mere solitude, miserable solitude, under a juniper tree in the wilderness, adapt us for spiritual apprehension. It is solitude with God at Horeb, unsustained by nature, that is the true preparation for spiritual judgment and instruction. We find after performing a great miracle that the Lord constrained His disciples to get into a ship. (Matt. 14) There they were toiling in rowing, and He saw them, and yet He came not to them until about the fourth watch of the night, and then would have passed by them. The effect of the demonstration of His power in the miracle had passed away, and that event could not avail them now. If it had enlarged their faith in the Lord they would have had a gain from it now; but then it would have been from the Lord, and not from the evidence of His power. The Lord wished to establish the value of Himself to them, and to teach them, that the acts of His power were only proofs of His own value; but that proofs could never suit in emergency without Himself. Miracles were to prove the value of His interest in His people, but in no wise to supersede the greater gain of nearness to Himself. After the miracle His disciples are placed in such an exigence that, unless He draws near, there is no hope of escape, but, when he

does," immediately the wind ceased; " and at this they are amazed, evidently not having learned from the miracle what they ought; even, that He who wrought it was not merely displaying His power on one occasion, but thereby expressing His interest in those for whom His power would at any time be in operation. In the histories of God's people in the Scriptures we find that continually humiliation and disaster immediately succeed some signal mark or demonstration of God's power in their behalf. Why is this? Simply because to be signalized is always dangerous, unless the soul is simultaneously kept conscious of the necessity of dependence on God. When the disciples told the Lord that even the devils were subject unto them, He replied, " Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." What God is to me is greater than anything God does before me.

No sooner is the song for the marvelous deliverance from Egypt ended, than the children of Israel are murmuring on account of Marah. What does the great demonstration of power in the passing through the Red Sea avail them now? They must realize their dependence on God as every present help in time of trouble. The great deliverance proved to them His value, but Himself and not the proof is the only sure blessing in every time of need; and therefore the needs-be that we should be brought into such trying circumstances.

When David reaches the summit of regal consequence, he numbers the people; but in his humiliation he learns God in a way and manner that he had never known before; just as in his fall respecting Bathsheba he had learned the depth and magnitude of God's restoration; so now he learns in the hour of humiliation a fuller revelation of His mind than ever before made known to any one. Not that it is good to fall, but God's grace is a greater thing to my soul than the acts of His power, and therefore David advanced more in moments of repentance than he ever did in any season of honor and glory. Paul found more strength to his soul from the communication, " My grace is sufficient for thee," than from all the evidence of the glory of which he was a wondering spectator.

The source of strength and blessing to man is in dependence on God. The tendency of a manifestation of power is to make me independent of God, as having power on my side. There is ever a craving for power in the natural mind because the thought of man since the fall is, that if he had power he could do better for himself than God would do for him. Man did not primarily in his nature deny the power of God; he distrusted His love, and as His power without love could not be trusted, the power was distrusted too, but at the same time it was always desired.

Men may own God's power abstractedly, but His love-never. They, therefore, seek the one to accomplish what their own love for themselves, not what God's love for them, would seek for in it. They have no faith. Man would use any borrowed power, and personally glory in it; consequently, the moment man is engaged by the power of God, apart from communion with Himself, it must be a snare to him, and must leave his soul barren and unfruitful. It is God Himself who strengthens the soul. " The Lord stood by me and strengthened me." The consciousness that the Powerful One LOVES me and is beside me, is the true invigoration of the soul. When Elijah heard the " still small voice," he returned to his work like an omnipotent man. When David was at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he was in spirit and intelligence more advanced, than ever he had been before; and when Paul said, " I take pleasure in infirmities, &c., that the power of Christ may rest upon me," he had reached the summit of moral glory.

I like to see the power of God that I may magnify His name; but the more I do so, the more do I desire in my own soul to realize, in an unseen, unmistakable nearness, that He is my God; and the latter is always dearer to me than the former, because the more distinctly I know Him, the more sincerely can I join in magnifying Him. Have we not seen gifts and distinct powers from God become a snare to the church, and the possessors of them, over and over again? The soul is more occupied with the expression than with the heart of Him from whom it came. Powerful teaching blesses me just in proportion as I can realize the love of Christ, of which the teaching is the exposition. If I am engaged with the exposition, as I might be by a poem, then it is mental and not spiritual. It is, in fact, beyond me, and if my conscience demand at some time hence my accordance with the results of the exposition, I discover that I received the exposition, and felt the power of it, without appropriating it to myself as the very sentiments of God's heart toward me. The consequence is, I am worse off than if I never heard, for I am humbled when I reckoned on gain. Real power, after all, consists in the inward sense it produces, not in the outward demonstration of itself. Paul would rather speak five intelligible words than possess the gift of tongues as a mere demonstration of power. People sometimes wonder at the manifestations of God's power, as if they were total strangers to the manner and greatness of it in their own souls. An undue place is given to that which nature can more readily apprehend, for with nature it is always from the outward to the inward, instead of vice versa.

May we be spiritual enough to own every gift and power from God as given, to the church, from the church, and for the church; but also may we know the "still small voice," the secret communion, the unseen fink which should be our real resource rather than and beyond any demonstration of power.

## Prayer: Brief Notes on Luke 11:1-9

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" And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, a lend me three loaves; for friend of mine in his journey is conic to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek. and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

In answer to their request to be taught to pray, the Lord here puts into the lips of his disciples the expression of spiritual desires; but it is not the entrance of the heart into the proper communion of the Church after the Holy Ghost had been given. The desires are perfect, but the place of conscious relationship to the Father, which gives confidence to the heart, was not yet known. It is looking up from earth to a Father in heaven, to care for them, and not sitting in heavenly places themselves. Still Christ teaches them, first, as to God-.to call God " their Father;" then directs them about the Father's glory; " Hallowed be thy name;" then as to the kingdom-" Thy kingdom come;" then to desire that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Secondly, He comes down to notice their daily necessities. In these, he teaches the need of constant dependence-" Give us day by day our daily bread;" "Forgive us our sins," and " Lead us not into temptation." " Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive," supposes that grace is already known, and should produce softness of heart. If I know that all my sins are forgiven, as having been imputed to Christ, that does not produce hardness of feeling or indifference about them; neither as to my own sins, nor the failings of others. It is not a question of justification here, but the Spirit of grace and truth in the soul, and the conscience being kept tender.

In the parable of the friend at midnight, we are taught not right desires alone, but the necessity of earnest, continued supplication that waits on God. God is supreme in government; and, though His goodness is perfect and infinite, there is, rightly, majesty in His goodness, which takes notice of all the circumstances through which we pass. In answering my prayers, therefore, God will use His own time; and this is right. For suppose a child asks his father for anything, and the father replies, " You must wait a little, then you shall have it;" and the child says, "No, I cannot wait, I must have it now, I must have it directly"-surely this would not be the right conduct of a child toward his parent. So, if we get out of a waiting position, we get into wrong circumstances, and the evil has to be corrected and judged, then blessing will be the result. While waiting, faith is exercised, and the spirit is broken down by the sense of need. But there may be more than what needs correcting in us. Look at Daniel as an example. He was a man greatly beloved, and he

prayed for three whole weeks, and ate no pleasant bread during that time. Now what was the meaning of this,? Why, that God had given Daniel such a deep sense of identification with Himself, in His purposes toward Israel, that He could make him wait three whole weeks before he has his request granted. This, in itself, was a great privilege; for it was having fellowship with God. So that it is an act of God's grace, if He makes us wait, in order to create a desire in our hearts, according to the deep interest we feel in what we seek at his hands. In the case of the friend who asks for three loaves of bread, there is a depth of interest betrayed in the desire for the thing; and because of his importunity he gains it. And there is always a certainty of God's answering in blessing, according to His thought and purpose of blessing-though He delay for the exercise of our hearts.

" And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."  
(Luke 18)

## The Present Work of God

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"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."-Rom. 12:6, 7, 8.

At a time when the Lord is so manifestly gathering souls to Himself, and when the minds of His people generally are either filled with the joy of that blessed work, for the longing desire to see it, it is exceedingly important that the due balance of truth and scriptural expectation be maintained. As to the first, there is the greatest danger of this balance of things indicated in this and other passages of the word of God being disturbed. He who is used of the Lord in conversion will be in danger of viewing that as the end of all ministry, and will be prone to undervalue what in its exercise is not accompanied with the demonstrations of the same power; and, on the other hand, where the soul is rejoicing in the grace displayed, there will be the temptation, unconsciously, perhaps, to leave the quieter path of teaching and exhorting, &c., for the more exciting one of being used in conversion.

The question, whether the conversion of souls to Christ, or the edification of believers, be the more important ministry, ought never to be raised. The same Lord that said, " Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," has also said, " Feed my sheep"- " Feed my lambs:" and where evangelizing is not in question, " Take heed unto all the flock," &c.

The more the Spirit of God is using the evangelist, or converting souls to Christ, the more imperative does the word become, " Let him that teacheth wait on his teaching,"-the more important the care for all the flock. But this, unless the supremacy of Christ be owned in the soul, will not be the natural tendency; nor will ministry tend to this where self is not put aside by the sense of the infinite grace of Christ. Doubtless, where Christ is more to the heart than self, the grace flowing to others, and by means of others too, will soften the heart and draw out the affections in care and service for those whom Christ has thus loved. No matter what channel grace may be flowing in, it makes the heart esteem Christ the more, and all on which Christ sets His stamp and name the more precious. The soul that practically feels the flowing stream of Christ's grace will neither envy others, nor leave its own path to imitate others; or pine to follow in a field to glean, because others have gathered there abundant sheaves for the Master's garner.

The expectations awakened by this wonderful and extending work of God, and in what it will issue, will differ according as the mind has been formed by habitual subjection to the divine word, or has merely yielded its assent to generally-received notions of the world's progress and a spiritual millennium.

To the mind of the writer, this work is the bright precursory indication of the speedy coming of the Lord for His saints, and the foretold of the world's approaching judgment. That the wave of

triumphant grace, which he has himself seen, in one place, and in one short month, carrying forward to certain and expected glory with Christ such multitudes of souls, which up to that time had been " without hope and without God in the world," will roll on, he has the most certain conviction. It is written, " At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

And then, " the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage." And then, " the door was shut."

The dispensation was ushered in, or rather the Spirit's bright witness to a risen Christ was marked, by the fruits of triumphant grace-taking the Jew from his formalism, and the Gentile from his moral degradation and his philosophic pride, and setting both outside the world where they had been living, in the certain hope of resurrection, and in the practical " waiting for God's Son from heaven." And now, after long ages of darkness, with here and there, and at distant intervals, a gleam of light and a transient testimony for Christ, and then sinking back into the general gloom, the dispensation is about to close with a final living testimony to the same triumphant grace. I mean not as to doctrine only-though to the observant mind there is something pregnant in the thought of the millions in this country that are just- now being impelled to listen in theaters and public places of amusement to the testimony, more or less clear, of that same grace, which in so many places is gathering its fruits, and presenting its witness, in quickened, joyous souls from amongst the most careless and ignorant and godless, as well as making worldly professors, by the very power of the blessing around them, and which has come into their own families, suddenly to awake up to the consciousness-and to bear witness to it too-that " all things are loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord," and to feel that His coming is about presently to put everything to the test.

Instruments for this work God knows where to find; and where there are none He can create them. Oftentimes they may be such as we should not look to be used by Him, and, beyond their own sphere, are plainly to be distrusted. But the work must go forward, for " He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

Discussions about the possession or the want of gifts have often proved to be vain and fruitless speculations, but the humble and patient exercise of whatever power the Lord has given for edification is always owned of Him, and results in the blessing of souls. Paul's exhortation to Timothy is, " do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry;" and the direction of the passage before us is, " Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering, or he that teacheth on teaching."

The source of the gift is to be acknowledged, and its verity is to be proved, where alone it can be proved-in its exercise. Subjection of heart to the Lord is the most acceptable sacrifice to Him; and it is the essential condition of soul for being used by Him. "To obey is better than sacrifice." "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

In all it should be the first concern to have the inward spiritual life keeping up with the outward exercise of power or service. Another thing to be remembered is, that prayer is the secret spring of all revivals. Not that prayer which is in the hearing of the persons sought to be affected by it,

though God may use this where the heart is simple, but prayer in the secret ear of the Lord, in which all may effectually-most effectually help on this work of the Lord.

To many, perhaps, this work of the Lord is altogether a matter of surprise; while others, in the quiet study of the word, have seen the doctrine, which is now asserting its triumphant power, being silently prepared, and as widely diffused, and have long contemplated the final issue of God's present working. Nothing in the portents of the times is unlooked for, because they have given heed to the word, which shows "beforehand" what the end will be; what the end of the church's hope, and the end, alas! of the world's glory! That a night of judgment is approaching for the world, brought on by the increasing corruption of the outward profession of Christianity, has been long seen; but that which, perhaps, has been to most a surprise is, this sudden gleam of brightness before the sun of heavenly grace sets in darkness upon this poor world.

Many, who are rightly rejoicing in this grace, and are being carried forward by it, see nothing beside it, and nothing beyond it; and imagine that the stream as it flows on, may without harm obliterate all the landmarks of distinctive truth. This is human infirmity. Grace does not destroy truth, nor does the multitudinous conversion of souls destroy the privileges and character of the church of God. The blessing is of God, and should be so owned wherever the tide is flowing, and with whatever it may be externally associated; but it can never be of God to use the blessing to neutralize the truth and will of Him who gives the blessing.

When Barnabas visited Antioch, and saw the grace of God in "the great number that believed, and turned unto the Lord," "he was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." And when Paul addresses the elders of Ephesus, at the close of his ministry, referring to the evils and sorrows that crowded around the scene of his labors, seeking to gain an entrance in order to corrupt and destroy, he says emphatically, "Therefore watch, and remember that, by the space of three years I, ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

"The time is short." "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." (Rom. 13:11, 12.)

For some very valuable and timely observations on the revival, (in Ireland especially,) see "A Few Words on the Present Revival."-ED.

## Priesthood, the Provision of God's Love to His People

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### Exodus 28

WE all know that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the key to the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. It is the key to all the offices of the Lord Jesus. The word that runs through the whole of it, the key-note, that which makes the epistle so precious to us, is that word " Son." It is the " Son" who is set before us, as fulfilling all the offices of all those who were raised up as types. He is the One by whom the Father has spoken. The Son is the Captain of Salvation. The Son is the High Priest. The Son is the Mediator of the New Covenant, &c., &c. And what is the meaning of the name? It tells out all the fullness of the heart of God. We are not to stop short of God Himself. The way to secure the not stopping short of God is to think of Jesus in all His offices, as Prophet, Priest, &c. The word "Son" leads us up into the heart of the Father, into the bosom of God. There is our resting place, there is our home.

In reading this chapter, the thought to be kept in mind is, that God seeing our need, our sinfulness and infirmities, has provided His Son as our Great High Priest.

Verse 1. " And take thou unto thee Aaron, thy brother," &c. It is God who chooses who the High Priest should be. This is alluded to in Hebrews, chap. V. to show that Christ's priesthood comes altogether from God, and the word " Son" is found in connection with it.

One part of the glory of the Lord Jesus, is executing His Priesthood on our behalf. We may see ourselves vile and worthless, but God infinitely values us. The heart of God is set upon His children. And so the Lord Jesus esteems it part of His glory to sustain the office of Priest in God's presence for us. If I look up to heaven I see Jesus presenting our prayer to the Father. Not like Aaron, who was sometimes asleep, and had to be roused to put on his garments. Jesus is ever alive to take the feeblest cry and present it to our Father. How this tells out the heart of God towards us!

Observe, another thing, the Priest was to be taken "from among the children of Israel." Now whilst it is true that the " Son" is made High Priest in contrast with men who have infirmity, yet there is this much of comparison that He has the nature that can sympathize. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." For it is the "seed of Abraham" He helps. Thus He takes up relationship with the human family of faith. The Holy Ghost delights to expatiate on the fullness of Jesus-how He becomes us. Not only as made higher than the heavens, but as having passed through all ages and scenes down here. Having been a child, He can sympathize with all the feelings of childhood; having been the carpenter's son, He knows all the trials of the daily Bourse of an earthly calling; and having been tempted of Satan, He knows what sore temptations mean. " For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

This chapter will be blessed to us, just as we discern what the person of our High Priest is. He is now serving us, a minister of the holiest before the Father, as the first verse says, " That he may

minister unto me in the priest's office."

Verse 2. "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron, thy brother, for glory and for, beauty. They were holy, glorious, and beautiful. There is everything in Jesus to satisfy our new nature. Wherefore, let us gird up the loins of our minds to look into these things. Instead of being occupied with earthly things, let us search into His attractive glory and beauty. It is the knowledge of the Lord Jesus alone, that can enable us to look at all we once prized as dung and dross, and to say, to earthly things, • "I have something better."

This chapter is most precious as the record of our Father's heart towards us. He knows what poor, infirm, weak children we are, and He deals with us accordingly. " Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." God does not act towards us according to what we ought. to be, but according to our need in the condition in which we are. God came down from heaven because we were not what we ought to be. Grace supposes sin and ruin, everything at enmity with God. But when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. We cannot think of ourselves too vilely; but God has put our names on the shoulders of His Son, and on His heart. That is our joy. Nothing short of this grace could meet our need, or satisfy His love towards us.

One remark I would add as to the names of the children of Israel. They were not engraved according to merit, but "according to birth." (Ver. 10.) Reuben, Simeon, and Dan's names, were as much engraven there, and were as near the heart of the High Priest, as Judah and Joseph's. The most inconsistent believer in Jesus is as much on His heart as the most devoted saint. This is grace. And it is grace that breaks our proud hearts and touches the life of the soul, and breaks the power of sin, and constrains us to give ourselves up in holy, happy service to Jesus. In Luke 15 the shepherd seeks His sheep; and when He hath found it, "he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." So as soon as I am saved, I see my name engraven on His shoulders.

In verse 12, we see that the stones were "for a memorial unto Israel" as well as "for a memorial before the Lord." Thus Israel were to know that they were ever borne by Aaron, whilst Aaron bore them ever to remember them. I know myself as a poor, weak, failing one, full of infirmity; and although I am forgiven, I must also see myself sustained in the presence of God. I may say, that is true of Paul; but it is true of me also. Yes, my name is as much there as that of Judah; for Dan's and Simeon's were there. " He which stablisheth us with you in Christ is God." Adam failed, Israel failed; but we are set in Christ, and therefore secured. " They shall never perish, neither shalt any man pluck them out of my hand." But besides the knowledge of our security in seeing our names graven on His breastplate, we find that " he is able to succor them that are tempted." If we look up and see our names on His shoulders, we shall have the succor we need. But if we forget Jesus, and go on in our own strength, we shall be easily overcome, even by the naughtiness of a child.

Is it not blessed to remember Jesus as the minister of the sanctuary in heaven, where He is ever ministering for us? And this too as the expression of the love of God. toward us. For the Holy Ghost, as the end of all His teaching, would ever lead us up through Jesus to God Himself. Thus we have communion; and we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Rain in the Time of the Latter Rain

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" Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain."-Zech. 10:1.

Mere speculations as to the probable extent and course of the present work of the Lord in gathering souls to Christ would be fruitless and vain; but inquiries from the Word of God, as to whether there are Scriptural grounds to guide our expectations in this respect, must be naturally awakened in every thoughtful mind.

That the present dispensation will end in judgment and not in universal, or millennial blessing, is assumed to be incontrovertibly settled by the Word of God. Still there is room for the inquiry whether there is anything in Scripture to bar the expectation of a general revival -a brief, rapid, wide-extended and final gathering of souls to Christ by the testimony of His grace before the Church is taken out of this scene, and judgments on the world set in.

One thing must be borne in mind, that, until the point is reached in which the words " take hold," " He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still," it is " the accepted time," it is " the day of salvation." As long as ever it can be called " to-day," we are to hear His voice. Moreover, when the Church's affections are represented as turned with the greatest earnestness toward Christ and she is answering most truly to her relationship to Him, and " the Spirit and the bride," in anticipation of His return, are saying, " Come," the invitation of the gospel, in its widest sense, is expressed in the words, " Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

And in the application of the parable of the ten virgins in Matt. 25, there seems to be a positive declaration that at last there will be a universal awakening: "then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

So that there does not seem to be in the word any bar to the expectation of a work of God, in connection with the triumphant testimony of His grace, to any extent the Lord may please; or to any display, at the close of the dispensation, of the energy of the Holy Ghost in drawing souls to Christ that shall answer in character and degree to that which was witnessed at the beginning: and thus a practical exemplification be given, in God's ways, of the principle, "the last shall be first and the first last."

To Christians who are looking for a spiritual reign, or a millennium brought in by the energy of the Spirit, and not by previous judgments, of course such reasoning as this can only be viewed as supererogatory; for the question has already been pre-judged on the basis of Old-Testament prediction. To others it may not be without its profit in directing their thoughts; though, if we think of what He has already accomplished in Sweden, and in America, and Ireland, and various parts of the continent, besides our own country, it must be confessed that God has, in His grace, already almost taken it out of the region

of expectation and made it matter of fact.

God is sovereign in His actings; but then He is acting in the present age in the supremacy of His grace. How much therefore may we not count upon in farther mercy even where His grace has wrought so much; and in places that have not been visited thus at all how much may we not expect from the love of His heart Not that it is expected there will be a permanent state of things issuing from this work; or even a long-continued work. Outward events, to those who have studied the prophetic word, are such as to indicate a speedy close, and now the moral signs are in correspondence. As to the day of labor, it may be said, " The night cometh when no man can work;" but as to the position of the believer, it may with emphasis, be added, " the night is far spent and the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

I may not be able to connect myself with all that has accompanied this work of the Lord, which has been so markedly begun, and which our souls should be stirred up most earnestly to pray may be carried on; but in the work itself every soul that is attached to the Lord Jesus must sincerely rejoice. The means, it is true, that are used by some to produce an immediate effect in connection with the preaching of the word-perhaps used in faith by those whom the Lord has owned in this work-I might not be able to adopt, though earnestly praying to the Lord for the result. Want of faith might possibly hinder me, if the dread of imitation and excitement did not; while from the efforts of others I might be obliged to stand aloof altogether, from the manifest indications of the flesh and of a mind not subject to God. But even here, in the result we ought to be able to rejoice as Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached, though some preached Him of " envy and contention."

That God is doing a wonderful work in this day in the rapid conversion of souls to Himself, none who have at all witnessed His power in this respect will be disposed to doubt. And it seems to be of immense importance that the hearts of all His people should be awakened to it-that by prayer and hearty desire it may be helped forward. It is not asked nor sought that the truth received from the study of the word should be given up, or that the conclusions which have been come to from the quiet study of the Scriptures should be weakened.

But if God is doing a work, who are those that ought to be interested in it, and actively associated with it? " Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Surely the Lord God will do nothing; but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:6, 7.)

It is but little matter to any who have been brought into contact with this work how it is received by others, i.e., whether the report of it be received with credence or unbelief. It- so brings its own credentials with it, that as soon might there be a question about the sun's light when it is shining all around, as a question raised in the hearts of such, whether the Lord is doing a wonderful work on souls or not.

Christians, especially, who have the coming of the Lord as their hope, of all others, should be prepared to expect and to welcome this work; because the Lord to them (if I might so speak) assigns the reason of His delay and of the prolongation of their hope. They are to " account that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation."

So that, while this sudden and unlooked-for work (blessed in itself) is going on and gathering souls for Christ's appearing, it declares emphatically that His coming is at hand; because the very cause

of the delay is being removed by Him who has taught us that " the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness."

Moreover, there is a special need of prayer, that the enemy may not profit by imitations of this work, and so cast discredit upon it; and that souls may have an adequate care, through the Lord's grace, that are thus suddenly brought " out of darkness into his marvelous light." God's counsels of grace will surely be accomplished; but then He loves to associate the desires of His people with His own work; as He says of Israel, " Yet for all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do them for them." And as in the passage before us, " Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain, so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

While doing all honor to those whose preaching has been owned of the Lord in the gathering of souls to Christ, it would be folly to suppose that nothing more than this is needed. It would, in truth, be like ignoring the use of the epistles of the New Testament-which it will be remembered were all written for the use of persons already brought by the gospel home to Christ. There is, and will be, the immensely-increased need of teaching and exhorting and pastoral care. For however lightly we may think of mere official pastorship, nothing can be more important than, for Christ's sake, to care for the sheep of Christ. In this view, how earnestly should each one pray that, in all humility of mind, he may be used as an instrument to warn, or teach, or comfort, or guard, those souls whom God is gathering for Himself out of the midst of this evil world. Not that there is the least thought of building up a permanent state of things; or that there will be time for the development of the ordinary phases of revival, of decline, and of ultimate indifference; but rather the bright and blessed expectation of a people being prepared to meet the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.

" While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut"

## The Resurrection

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### 1 Corinthians 15

The resurrection, after all, is that which is the full and perfect deliverance from the whole effect and consequence of sin. At the same time it shows that what God has predestinated us to is an entire new state and condition of things altogether. Nothing is more important than that we should clearly apprehend what it is God is about; whether he is correcting the old thing, or setting up. an entirely new thing. Now the resurrection shows that God is not bringing about a modification of the scene in which we are, but that He is bringing in a totally new power. The discernment of this has the most important effect upon the way of life, the modes of seeking to do good, the objects and efforts of Christians. Christ went about doing good, and we are of course to follow His example; but what of the state of things around did Christ correct or set right when down here? Nothing! The very result of the Lord's coming into the Midst of the Jewish nation was just this, that they rejected, hated, and crucified the Prince of Life and Lord of Glory. The Lord Jesus went about doing good, but seemingly in vain. Still none of God's counsels have failed; but as to the outward result, the Lord said, " I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught." (Isa. 49:5.) And so far as the outward scene went in which He labored, there was no kind of restoration; for the more love Christ manifested, it only brought out more fully man's hatred to Him. " For my love they are mine enemies."

The resurrection introduces an entirely new scene, so that Paul says, " Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." Now it is a very difficult thing for men to submit their minds to this truth, because it plainly tells man that, in himself as man, he is totally and utterly ruined. It is quite true, and I fully admit, that naturally man has great and wonderful faculties; and faculties which it may be will be much more developed than they now are. But still, with all this, man morally is utterly ruined and lost. Paul opens out in this chapter what the character and power of resurrection is, the resurrection of the just being the subject of it, although that of the unjust is also glanced at. It is not merely God acting in sovereign power, which can take a dead thing out of the state of death; but by virtue of association with the life of Christ we have participation in Christ's resurrection. It is not only that we are blessed, but blessed with Christ. If He lives, we also live together with Him. " Because I live, ye shall live also." If He is the righteousness of God, " we are made the righteousness of God in him." If He is the Heir of Glory, we are " joint heirs together with him," and " where he is, there shall we also be." If He is the Son, we are sons also. " I ascend to my Father and your Father." We are put, through grace, into this wonderful place of sons; so that it is a real thing; and having thus been brought by adoption from a state of sin to that of sons, the Holy Ghost is given to us as the power of our enjoyment of it. Such is the marvelous place into which we are brought, even that of everlasting companionship with Christ, " members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Man down here on the earth " disquieteth himself in vain;" for wonderful as his natural faculties may be, as soon as " his breath goeth forth he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish." What then becomes of his wondrous faculties? All is gone! for there is no fruit whatever reaped by himself.

The man may have I directed the world, but what of that, if death comes in and writes nothingness on all his powers. Another may come after him and improve upon what he has done, but it is all gone as regards himself forever, although the man has a moral responsibility in connection with it all.

In this chapter the apostle was meeting the minds of those who had cast doubts on the resurrection, but not on immortality. A man will cast doubts on the resurrection, while he will speak of his immortality and magnify himself in it, because it is me. It is I that am immortal. But if I am the dead thing God raises from the dead, what then-where am I? Why my pride is brought down, and God's power is brought in and exalted. Therefore if I am talking of immortality, I am talking of myself; but if talking of resurrection, I am wholly cast on God.

Resurrection is connected with death, (I now speak of believers,) but it is the coming in of God's power to deliver from the power of death; not merely an escape from my sins, but a full and perfect deliverance from all the consequences of my sins, so that even the very dust of my body will be raised in divine glory. In Christ's death I also get another truth, which is, that my resurrection is consequent on Christ's death and resurrection. I share in it as forgiven; for Christ quickens me, in virtue of having put away my sins. " And you being dead in your sins hath he quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. 2:13.) We are partakers of the life in which Christ is risen; so that I have a life totally discharged from all question of sin; for I cannot have life without having forgiveness, and hence rest and peace.

Christ had an unchangeable life as Son of God; but He died as a man; for there was complete evidence given through many incontrovertible proofs that He was really a dead man, and that He was raised from the dead and seen of " witnesses chosen before of God." How entirely Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man is seen by His being raised from the dead. All the gospel rests on the resurrection of Christ. There is no gospel at all, unless there is the resurrection. This is a point of the deepest interest, showing how really Christ entered into the case. So truly was Christ dead in consequence of our sins, that if, He did not rise from the dead, then all is utterly gone forever. But so completely was Christ a dead man for us,, that if He is not raised from the dead, no man can ever be raised. And if dead people are not raised, then is Christ not raised. Yet we know He could not be holden of death; that were impossible. It is most important for us clearly to see and understand this, that our faith and hope may be "in God which raiseth the dead." Thus everything that could possibly come between the sinner and God has been entirely removed-the burden of sin on the soul-God's wrath against sin-Satan's power-the weakness of man in death. Christ put Himself under ALL THIS. " He bore our sins," for He cried, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" By grace Christ put Himself entirely in our place. " He who knew no sin was made sin for us." All my sins are therefore entirely gone: He bore them all on the cross, and went down under the power of death, and rose again without them. Has death any more power over Him? No, for He is risen in the power of an endless life. But still He has been there on account of our sins, and has entirely put away the sin that took Him there, having risen without them. What can there then be between me and God which Christ has not entirely put away? Nothing. Seeing then that Christ has so completely acted out this condition before God, death is no longer death to me; it has lost its power and its terror too; for now death to me is simply " departing to be with Christ." It is to be " absent from the body, present with the Lord;" it is but the getting rid of a mortal body.

The power of the resurrection is distinctive; and it is of great importance to see this. God's eye rested on the one blessed One who had glorified Him about man's sin; so that He takes Him from amongst the dead up to Himself. We see a whole course of sin had gone on to the full accomplishment even of putting God's Son to death on the cross. But over all this evil Christ gained so complete a victory, and so thoroughly glorified every attribute of God about man's sin, that God's eye rested on this one blessed and righteous One with complete satisfaction. And thus, as He said, was the world convinced of righteousness, " because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." But now, we who believe see Him-that is, by faith; being quickened together with Him, having all trespasses forgiven us. For God does not raise a saint to condemn him,-no; but to make him a partaker of all Christ is. For Christ has accomplished a righteousness on which God has set His seal, in that He raised Him from the dead. God's eye being fixed on this accomplished righteousness, this object of His love, He took Him up to Himself; and having quickened us together with Christ, we are made partakers of it. Were there no resurrection, it would be complete abandonment by God; for He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And " if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." For if Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain; we have not been preaching the truth of the gospel, but preaching a lie: and your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

But now comes a full burst of testimony to this accomplished work: "Now is Christ risen from the dead." Thus, this righteous and beloved One is raised. out of this scene into an entirely new. one, even that of becoming the first, fruits of them that slept. For if Christ be raised, His saints must be raised, as a Head cannot be raised without a body, it would be monstrous. " There is, then, the broad statement in John 17, " Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The resurrection comes in, not by the power of God only, but also by man. " For since by man came death, by man also came resurrection from the dead." It is the Man Christ Jesus coming in in power. Every created thing, the whole universe, is to be wholly put under this Righteous Man -this new Glorified Man-the Second Adam. He only is excepted which did put all things under Him-that is, God the Father.

As spiritual men, we now belong to this Second Adam, being content now to suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together with Him. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Christ had the heart to come down to us. He did not throw down the blessing to us from heaven; but He came Himself to bring it. Such was His wondrous love-a love which was stronger than death. Now He is set down at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. Meanwhile, He is gathering out His joint-heirs-His friends. Christ came in grace, and took our place as sinners; and now takes us up to His place of righteousness: for to sit with Him on His throne is to be our place; and this, through a real, living association with Himself. He is the first-born among many brethren. He wrought the work alone, but He takes His power with the many. We may be burdened, groaning in conflict, still we have certainty. The Holy Ghost is the witness of what Christ has done for us: we are " made the righteousness of God in him." What a thought, that I have this standing I before God, though vile in myself! In virtue of this, I hate sin, because it is so different from what I actually am there.

All power in heaven and earth is given to Christ. All are to be brought under His power. Not only will His saints bow before Him-who do it now with delight, in the power of a new life; but His enemies must bow before Him. He is gathering His friends now, but His enemies will be dealt with

by and by. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. The wicked dead are glanced at here; for when death's power is destroyed, the wicked dead will all rise, as being no longer holden of it. What a different resurrection will this be to the resurrection of the saints, in virtue of their association with Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost! (Rom. 8:11.) Then, when all things are made subject, and Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, the mediatorial reign will be at an end, because God will be all in all. Therefore Christ will not be ruling as the mediatorial man then; but Christ the man will never cease to be " the first-born among many brethren." Subjection is man's perfection. Therefore Christ's subjection as man results from His perfection. " Then also shall the Son himself be subject." This is most blessed, that forever and forever He will be in our midst-He whose heart is love-He who, as the Man of sorrows here, brought down God's love to us! He will take His place in our midst as the Second Adam-as the Head and Source and Channel of every blessing.

If I am now joying in God, it is in virtue of being risen with Jesus, God's perfect delight. Why is it that God has given us so full a revelation of these things as He has by His word and Spirit, but that we might know and enjoy them now in our souls; as David says, " For thy word's sake and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things to make thy servant know them." 2 Sam. 7:21. God has given us intelligence of these things, that knowing and enjoying them we may be sanctified by them. The simple child who loves his father knows more about the relationship than the philosopher who might write volumes on the subject. The child would be astonished that one should be unable to understand that love of the father which he as an affectionate child was living in the enjoyment of, but still he might not be able to explain it. Unless we are in the relationship we can never enter into the feelings which result from it. The relationship is not formed in heaven. The fruits of it will be enjoyed there, but the relationship is formed here on the earth; while the one who is known and loved as a father, being in heaven, the child wishes to be there, as it is very natural for the child to be with the father. Fellowship is more than inheritance. It is most blessed to have the inheritance beneath our feet, but it is much more blessed to have fellowship with God as our Father above us. We have poor foolish hearts needing to be exercised; but still we have accomplished glory, accomplished righteousness, and all in virtue of the accomplished work of Christ, so that our hearts bow before Him. The reason of all this blessedness is " That in the ages to come he might show forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." The more faithfulness there is in us, the more sorrow, doubtless; but then there will be consolations abounding. Only let us take up the cross, and if it be really the cross, we shall find Jesus with it, and the earnest and spring of glory in our hearts.

The power, then, which delivers us from wrath, from sin, and from Satan, is the resurrection of Christ in virtue of His accomplished righteousness, and thus we are brought into fellowship with Him. Our portion, whether in suffering down here or in glory up there, is all in Christ, as the One risen from the dead. The Lord keep our hearts full of rejoicing, crucifying the flesh, and as being dead to law, sin and the world. I live to God in the same power in which Christ lives. The Lord give us thankful hearts for His unspeakable mercy.

## Select Sentences

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1. Faith is present dependence upon a present God; it cannot live out of His presence.
2. When is faith most wanted to sustain the soul? When all visible evidence of power is removed.
3. The real amount of our faith is proved when there is nothing visible to cling to.
4. We are never so near failure as when we have acted faithfully. We can hardly trust God in two consecutive instances.
5. The great secret of all power and permanency now is faith in God-nothing visible, nothing tangible. The soul finds strength and encouragement as it reaches unto God.
6. You may be comforted by fellowship, and have your heart refreshed; but you must work by your own individual faith and energy, without leaning on any one whatever; for if you do, you cannot be a faithful servant.
7. Service must ever be measured by faith and one's own communion with God. Saul even may be a prophet when he gets amongst the prophets; but David was always the same, in the cave or anywhere.
8. When there are great arrangements for carrying on work, there is not the recognition of that inherent blessing " which tarrieth not for the sons of men." I do not tarry for man if I have faith in God.
9. The whole course of a Christian should be truthful. If we sin, the truthful place is confession.
10. We do not undo wrong by doing what appears to us to be right, but by justifying God in confession, and taking the place He assigns to us. He is ever able to come in when we are humble, and work for His own name's sake.
11. The love of the world will ever keep the conscience restless, and cast it into the bonds of the law, and turn it aside from the cross of Christ, which is the only power of God to purge the conscience. For in it there shines such a bright, self-sacrificing love, that the love of the world cannot stand before it. God's counsel by the cross is both to purge the conscience and to give victory over the world to the sinner that clings to it.
12. Real christian progress is characterized by our estimate of great essential truths-truths connected with, and flowing from, the person of Christ, " that I may know him."
13. The communion of saints did not spring from their agreement with one another, but from their union of heart about God.
14. Human amiability is often enmity with God.
15. We must learn that after all our progress, we are nothing better than sinners saved by grace.

16. Light does not guide until it has overcome darkness.

17. To be a servant you must purge yourself. If you cannot purge yourself you cannot rise to the surface.

18. The door open for self is open for Satan too.

19. The sin-sanctioning saint's portion is a wounded conscience-for the grieved Spirit is a griever.

20. To honor God and retain an unspotted conscience are of more worth than intercourse with good men; communion of saints I will not say, for that can never be found apart from His honor and a pure conscience.

## Suffering and Trusting

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### Daniel 3

In the narrative of this chapter, we have a picture of the spirit and character in which the godly remnant will pass through their trials. It is not to the character of their trials, however, the outward difficulties and deliverances here referred to, so much as to the spirit of the thing that I desire briefly to call attention. In Israel, God was showing forth His mighty power in temporal deliverances, as in the case of Pharaoh; but with us, it is a different thing. Being spiritually delivered, we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. All through, those who are faithful to God have been a suffering people. Obedience and reliance on God characterize the seed all through.

We find here, that, besides the love of power, they use religion to unite and band together, to oblige conformity to the king's word. No matter whether king or pope if it is his religion; for religion being the strongest motive in the human heart, men use it to sway and influence others to gain their own selfish ends. This we find here in full perfection. He who wielded God's power, and in whose hand God put it, never used it on God's part. For God having tried man under the law, and man having failed, He then put absolute power into the hands of one man; but instead of using it in serving God, he sets up an image, and commands all men to worship it. What do we find as the result? God's people abstain from it in the character of the remnant. They will not submit, nor do they. Of course this is a great crime, upsetting the whole thing. Then comes persecution, and to that they do submit.

However God might allow His people to suffer, nothing ought to alter their reliance on Himself. Faith was as simple a thing in Babylon as in Jerusalem. God is the God of heaven and earth at all times, and none can hinder His power, or the exercise of it in grace towards His people. He may suffer them to be in trial-He may not always give outward deliverance; but patience is always the same, and the ground of confidence is the same here in Babylon as in Jerusalem. If the circumstances of trial are different, the Lord's power of interfering is always the same. Circumstances never hinder that a bit. The outward trial may conceal God's power from our eyes, but He is always the same. I doubt not in this day many a heart is feeling discouraged, and ready to say, " Who will show us any good?" The answer follows: " Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!" And what could you get more? What is better or mightier than the light of God's countenance? However sorrowful we may be about things, that is not to weaken our confidence in God. It was when all seemed hopeless in Israel that " Immanuel" was found among them; and however hopeless the condition of God's people may seem when a false god is set up, God remains the same.

Mark, now, the perfect power of the king, and the perfect patience of these faithful sufferers. If they had resisted the power, it would have been over with them in a moment, as they would then have taken it out of God's hand. But now they change the king's word by their patience. If they had opposed Nebuchadnezzar it would have been all over, for God gave the king his power; but they submitted, therefore God could deliver them.

What is the effect of these faithful ones being in the trial? The identification of their names with God as He was called the God of Abraham. "Whoever shall speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego." What a blessed thing to be thus associated with God, having His name associated with theirs; and how blessed the identification of the saints with the God who is not ashamed to be called their God! It was by nonresistance that they reached this glory, by bowing to the power and will of God, although evil as regards the exercise of it in the king's hand. If we get into the humble low place of suffering under the power, we shall find God's power put forth to deliver. We see here what quietness and peace of heart they have, whether it be in refusing to worship, or suffering the furnace, or coming out with honor; and it is sure to bring the blessed reward of ever having God's name identified with ours; and the God whom we have known as our God, and whom we have cleaved to in trial down here, and He to us, is the same whose name attaches itself to us in the glory.

## A Test of the Heart

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" He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."-Luke 11:23.

When Christ is manifested, people must take their stand either for Him or against Him. There may be natural claims and natural affections; but they must not come in when Christ is in question. " Let the dead bury their dead," is then the word; and "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

I must be either on the side of Christ or Satan; there is no neutral ground. As Joshua said, " Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" In the contests of Canaan there could be only for and against. So we have spiritual enemies to contend with; and Joshua leading the people on in conflict, is a figure of the Spirit's leading the soul against our spiritual enemies. In this conflict, whosoever is not with me must be against me. I must be acting either with Christ and the Holy Spirit, or else with the world and the devil.

Christ has become the center of all God's thoughts, and of all that God owns, and we have consequently to judge our hearts in detail as to whether He is in everything our center and aim. We may be occupied even in gathering Christians together; yet if it is not Christ in our own spirit it is but scattering. If Christ be not the center it is not God's gathering, but man's scattering; for God knows no center of union but the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ then must be the object; Christ the center; and nothing but Christ the end; for whatever is not gathering round that center, and for that center, and from that center, is only scattering.

## Notes of a Lecture on Titus 2:11-14

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" For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath 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; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

It is very striking to notice the connections in which the summary of divine truth contained in these verses, is introduced. The chapter is occupied with teaching what sort of conduct christianity demands from those who profess it according to the relative position in life in which they may be found. It teaches what is becoming in aged men and in aged women. It tells us, also, how young women should behave; and what should be characteristic of young men. It then takes up the common, every-day, conduct which is due from servants to their masters; and while teaching them to be obedient, and to seek to please them in everything-guarding against insolence and dishonesty-" that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things;"-it adds, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath 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; who gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Now there is a reason for then introduction of this passage here; it is simply this: that, while men are satisfied-and must be satisfied, for they can go no further-with the expression of the mere outward behavior, the word of God occupies itself with the creation and correction of the motives and springs from whence all conduct flows. More than this no conduct can ever be acceptable in the sight of God that does not flow from a heart subjected to His grace, which brings salvation; and that is not swayed by its daily powers. Rules of conduct are not given, cannot be given, to those whose hearts have not been subjected to " the obedience of faith."

But even here, amongst christians, there is a very frequent mistake. While the world values christianity merely for its collateral results, such as the reformation of manners and its conservative effect on society, &c., christians too often are occupied with the working and effect of God's grace, in the subjects of it-whether themselves or others-to the exclusion of the contemplation of that grace in its divine and absolute character, and in its first and grand effect. I mean this: ordinarily the christian's mind is more occupied, as -expressed in the passage before us, with what the grace of God teaches, than with what it brings. It teaches us to deny ungodliness, &c., but before it teaches, it brings salvation. How many may be found most anxious to discover, what men now call the subjective power of this grace, who at the same time are utterly at sea as to what is meant, in corresponding phrase, by its objective power! Surely it is well, and necessary, in its place, to see to it that we yield ourselves to the teaching of God's grace, when its lesson is, " that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and

godly, in this present world." But it is not well to overlook or underestimate, the absolute power of that grace in what it brings. The grace of God brings salvation, or is salvation-bringing, to the lost and ruined, before it is teaching in those whom it saves.

" The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared," is but the succinct description of God's intervention in infinite love by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the accomplishment of redemption.

Apart from all the effects and fruits of grace in those who are the subjects of it, there is God's intervention in perfect absolute goodness, in the scene of ruin and death, which sin has introduced, for the perfect and entire deliverance out of it. The grace of God brings salvation into this world, where sin and death and Satan's power mark the condition of man's existence; and that apart from all effects of that grace, in peace of conscience, or holiness and happiness, on the part of those that believe. There is the grace itself, as well as the blessed fruits which it produces. The salvation which it brings has its own proper character, as the intervention of God in divine love and power, as well as its own blessed results in the position, Godward, to which it brings its objects.

The two termini of a Christian's course are here marked as the results of this interposition of God in grace: viz., salvation and glory. The Christian's path, I repeat it, is here shown to lie between the starting-point, which is salvation, and the goal, which is glory. Grace and glory are inseparable. Conduct, exercise of heart, trial, conflict, service, lie between these two points, and in God's estimate take their character from them; but the salvation was accomplished alone by Christ's appearing in grace-for " grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And the glory will be accomplished, alone, by Christ's appearing in glory. This is what the passage states. " The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." It then adds, " looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Intermediately it tells us that the grace, which brings salvation, teaches us " that denying ungodliness and -worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" while in verse 14, we have the constraining motive to holiness in the end for which Christ gave Himself for us. " Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

This is plainly practical as the end, in us, in this world, of Christ's infinite love.

Let us look, then, first, at the character of the deliverance, or salvation, which this wondrous intervention of God in grace brings.

This cannot be learned by going over the heads of systematic divinity, but by a reference to the character of man's condition through sin, as unfolded in the word of God, and manifested by the suffering and death of Christ. Whatever there is of moral distance from God through sin, this salvation, which "the grace of God" brings, meets, and sets aside. " For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." Sin in its very nature separates from God; for light cannot have fellowship with darkness; but then it is said, " Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Sin, and death, and Satan's power, and the judgment of God-all marked man's condition of ruin, and all must be met before salvation, full and adequate, can be proclaimed. It is not enough to raise man from his degradation and moral pollution, if such a thing could be, and set him on his pathway to happiness. The conscience must be set at rest on

the ground of every claim of God in His righteous holiness having been met, and every possible consequence of sin set aside. And this is the salvation which the grace of God brings. It brings eternal life into this region of death; for "God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." It brings in divine righteousness into the midst of condemnation. For " he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It brings deliverance from Satan's power; for " through death (Christ) destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil." Nay more, the salvation which the grace of God brings puts us in the very place, and position, and acceptance before God, and makes us partakers of the very life and glory of Him by whom the salvation has been wrought. It has no other measure. It has no lower character. Was ever love like this!

There is, indeed, the teaching of this grace, which is all-important in its place; but what the heart must know first, as it is its first action, on the part of a God of goodness, is its salvation-bringing power; for without the knowledge of the salvation, its teaching will be misapprehended and in vain.

This grace of God, then, first brings a perfect absolute deliverance to the soul from the whole consequences of sin, and brings into God's presence in acceptance, according to the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the salvation lies in His obedience and sufferings for sin, in the acceptableness of His sacrifice, and in the power of His resurrection; and " as he is so are we in this world." This is all absolute; it is God's part in the grace which brings salvation.

And as it is absolute in its character so is it universal in its aspect and bearing. " The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." It is unrestricted in its character; as the sun shines for all, though some even hide themselves from its light. " God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life." " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But the grace received becomes teaching in those who are the subjects of the salvation which it brings. It teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And here, I observe, it is " the grace" that teaches, and not something else. It is not man's wisdom, or man's morality, mixing itself with that which is divine in his salvation-and, I may add, divine in the nature which it imparts. It is the grace which brought the salvation still acting-but acting now in the subjects of it, and on the divine nature which it imparts. They are not human motives that form, and fashion, and produce the morality of a Christian, any more than it is human power that accomplishes his salvation. It is " the grace of God" that teaches him as well as saves him.

This is very remarkably shown in a passage in Timothy, (1 Tim. 3:16,) the force of which is very frequently over looked. The apostle would teach Timothy how he ought to behave himself " in the house of God;" and he then presents the formative power of all true godliness, in the words, " Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

This is often quoted and interpreted as if it spoke of the mystery of the Godhead, or the mystery of Christ's person. But it is the mystery of godliness, or the secret by which all real godliness is produced-the Divine spring of all that can be called piety in man. " God manifest in the flesh," is the

example and the power of godliness, its measure and its spring. Godliness is not now produced, as under the law, by Divine enactments; nor is it the result in the spirit of bondage in those (however godly) who only know God as worshipped behind a' veil. Godliness now springs from the knowledge of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It: takes its spring and character from the knowledge of His person as " God manifest in the flesh; " the perfectness of His obedience, " as justified in the Spirit; " the object of angelic contemplation, and the subject of testimony and faith in the world; and His present position as " received up into glory."

This is how God is known; and from abiding in this, godliness flows. And, as in the passage before us, between the salvation, which is the result of the appearing of the grace and the crowning of " that blessed hope " which the believer looks for in the appearing of the glory, is the teaching of the grace that has brought salvation. It teaches the denial of ungodliness and worldly desires, as at war with the ends of redemption, and contrary to the character and position in which salvation places us as " delivered from this present evil world." Certainly the cross and the glory alike forbid the allowance of ungodliness and the pursuit of worldly desires. It was the world that crucified.

Christ; and in the appearing of the glory worldly desires can have no place. " For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof." It will be all withered by the appearing of the glory. But sobriety, righteousness, and godliness are due from the believer towards the world, as a witness; and due towards God as a witness of the conforming power of His most precious grace.

Already I have noticed that this passage presents the believer's path as lying between the salvation, which was accomplished by Christ's appearing in grace, and the glory, which will be accomplished by Christ's appearing in glory. " Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing (or epiphany of the glory; as it was the epiphany of grace) of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." The salvation which the grace of God brings settles every question between God and the soul as to sin and condemnation; and the appearing of the glory will bring those who are Christ's into the enjoyment of the presence of God and Christ, in the perfected victory of Christ, and in the possession of all that can fit us for His presence in glory. " Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. 3:20,21.) " Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:28.) " We are saved by hope;" and nothing so molds the affections for heaven as " waiting for God's Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." In possession, and in the enjoyment, as to the soul, of this divine and perfected salvation, the believer has that which is far brighter in hope. He who, in sorrow and suffering, and in infinite love, wrought the salvation, is coming to receive us unto Himself; that where He is, there we may be also. We shall see Him as He is, and then we shall be made like Him.

All is divine and precious, infinite in love and goodness, in the way our God takes to act upon the soul. How touching is the motive to holiness which is presented in the closing verse of our passage! " Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Ver. 14.) Here we have the end of redemption

in the practical walk of the believer in this world. But what can equal the motive that is presented in the declaration, " Who gave himself for us?"

May our hearts more fully answer to its constraining power!

## The Wilderness

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Read Heb. 4:7, to the end.

We find here, not the Lord Jesus primarily, but a very solemn warning to those to whom the epistle speaks. The question is raised about His people down here, pointed to by Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness; whose difficulties, on the one hand, brought to light their want of faith and power, because the flesh was not judged, and on the other, the correction of the Lord, because they were found practically connected with Satan and not with Himself. Then there is a turn, (ver. 12,) and the soul is cast into heavenly association with Christ, who is there analyzing every thought of the heart, saying, " I will not let a single thought pass." (See ver. 12, 13.)

The question with regard to Israel was about the unity of the kingdom that God had taken up. He went down and took up a nation of slaves, and said, " These are my people." He prepared a tabernacle, and was to be among them. The question at issue was of unity with God's work. It was no wonder when God said, " I am King," that in effect He said also, I will settle all these questions. I will show who I am. I will show Pharaoh who is King of Israel-who this Jehovah is whom he does not know. And He lets Pharaoh go on to show out all the power of Satan. He brings the people, and they come out with a high hand. But the sea is in the way, and stops them. Well, whose are they? He will now see whether the people know where their center is, and whether their hearts could really answer Pihahiroth (i.e., the opening of liberty) to all the difficulties.. Then He traces their path-the water opens-a wall on either side for them. Israel goes down into the bottom of the sea, and their enemies pursue after them. The waters that stood on either side for Israel come together irresistibly upon Egypt, and Egypt is destroyed. But God and Israel are on the other side.

God, and God alone, was able to bring them through. He could have taken them into the land in a few days. But how many years did it take them to get to Canaan? Very many. But in the long wilderness path they learned to have to do with God alone. He would have the question put home to the people, whether they were the people of the living God-whether they had any spring in themselves, or whether all was flowing from Him. There was no spring in one of them. There might be a fullness of blessing into which God led Israel in the land of Canaan; but, as far as they were concerned, they were to prove there was not an Israelite that got one single drop of water as flowing from himself: God, and God alone, was able to supply them. He takes them through the wilderness.

It was the place of blessing for them: and it was the wisest place; because He could there make them all feel, not only that God could people Canaan, but that He was occupying Himself individually with them. And hence, they must have done with circumstances, and be satisfied with God, and nothing but God.

God took them up, and revealed to them certain types and shadows in connection with what He was doing for them, and what they were-the whole substance of which has been accomplished now. Responsibility in connection with the substance may have been put into man's hand, and

man failed in it; still, God began with the truth that Christ is risen and set down at God's right hand. Responsibility thus came in, that everything to be done on the earth should be done in the light of the tabernacle which God had pitched.

The question which began on the day of Pentecost, and has continued through the 1800 years since, and in this our day cannot be evaded, and cannot be limited so as to shut out the bearing of it on individuals, is a question of real unity with the thing that God has wrought—a question of vital and also practical fellowship with Him.

From the moment the glory of God has been shown to me, until I see His face in glory, the question is still of practical fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ—a fellowship growing out of vital union with Him who is alive from the dead. This question I cannot evade in any one thing, circumstance, or action! All must have reference to that practical unity.

Having settled the whole question about the clearing of His people from all that was against them—their acceptance before God, and the character of that acceptance, He settles we are all to be in the wilderness. Christ is, in patience, sitting at the right hand of God; but you and I are in the wilderness.

But because we are enabled to say that the judgment of all sin is behind us, and enabled to see that we are dead with Christ, have we nothing to do practically with dying daily? You are not taken out of your body: the law of sin is in your members. The question is, How far are we, practically, through faith, able to live as those that have died and are risen? How far can we be vessels of this individually? The grace of Christ has extended to us just where we were. Are we, then, vessels in whom the power of faith has made good all the blessings in Christ Jesus—vessels in whom He can work with this practical conformity to His life, death, and resurrection, in this wilderness? If His life had not been brought in, there never could have been this question; it never could have taken this shape. But in the wilderness, where we are, it is realized.

When the last dispensation has been brought in, and, spite of blessing, it has been proved that man can hold nothing, but is like melted gold poured into a vessel unfit to hold it, the precious weight of the metal smashing it into shivers; when it has been proved that man has entirely failed, the world got its power, and Satan the direction of things here below, all our rest, all our repose must be found in the simple recognition of the entire failure of man and the unfaillingness of God.

But why has the wilderness this power over the Christian?

We have got Satan behind, as to judgment, it is clear. But then what a long experience has he had of the heart of man! How skilled he is in seeing the suitability of the things he has set up! He has seen what man's heart was beguiled by—how skilled he is in using all that!

But what is the secret of his power with regard to us? What leaves us exposed to feel all the weariness of the wilderness—one foot dragging behind the other, scarcely able to drag up our ankles after us? The secret is just what came out with Israel. It had to learn itself in the wilderness, and we have to learn ourselves there. But what gives freshness to the heart in the recognition of all failure? The heart having individually to do with Christ, what comes out here is, the heart having to do with Christ, who can read to us individually what is in us, and be the applier to us individually of the remedy? What is to enable the saint to have in the wilderness a fresh heart and never to be

puzzled? Verses 12 and 13 of this chapter give the answer. The practical experience of the truth presented may differ very much; for it must be different in those who instead of learning by failure-by following their own hearts in their walk through the wilderness follow this and that vanity because their hearts are not connected with God-and those who do turn to Jesus and follow Him always! Peter's experience was different from Paul's, Abraham's from Jacob's. But Abraham had far less knowledge of self than Jacob. Abraham took God's word for it and went on with Him. He trusted God and had clean done with himself. Jacob had to realize the force of these two verses.

" For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." But if He knows everything in me, and knows it by contrast to what He, the perfect Son of man is, I do not want to hide my face as to the evil in me. I do not need to get a bit of Peter's ways or a bit of Jacob's ways coming out from me.

Christ suffered as my Substitute once, and received at the hand of God the whole judgment due to me. That Christ who has blessed me is the person with whom I have got to do and a part of whose glory is set forth in these verses. The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword. The Son of man with His sword in His mouth, as presented to us in the Revelation, is the Person with whom you and I have to do. I do not want to know myself as Jacob did. I do not want to detect a bit of Peter in myself. If I put myself in His hand and read all down what He knows of me-knows of me as I am in contrast with Himself-I hide my face in Him for He knows it all.

Have we then cultivated thoughts, not about ourselves, but about acquaintance with the heart-searching Son of man in heaven, who sees right down to the very bottom-the very thoughts and intents of your soul, and who sees and divides between them? Has your soul been before Him that He may discover the first buddings of everything-that He may put His hand in and stop them? Some deceive themselves by the intentions of their own hearts; others by their thoughts. His eye goes right down and discovers all. How far in any soul; (not of a sinner, for His priesthood has not to do with such;} but how far does He find in us that we are vessels in whom the Spirit of God abiding, there is this power of His death through the knowledge of His resurrection? His eye conies right down. He is never deceived. That is the first element to my own soul of having a fresh heart in the midst of apostasy in the wilderness. If there were a corner in my heart-the least corner-that Christ had not searched and probed-if there were the least atom undetected by Him, I am undone. I could have no peace. Would I like to hide anything from Christ? If it is Christ I have got to deal with, would I like to blind Christ? No! I would not! In desperate illness to blind a physician would be death! I cannot afford to blind Christ to my state, if I could do so. Would I not like him to know everything-every intention, every thought in me, down to the bottom, that He, who alone can, may bring in the remedy?

In my practical walk through the wilderness, I would rather have Christ searching out my weakness-pointing out what has to be corrected -than friends praising me for what is not praiseworthy before God Who am I; that He should search me out, and give me to know where the springs of God should flow into me-should give me to see just where there is anything that chokes

the inflowing? Who are we, that God should deal with us after such sort? God wants there to be more freshness in us. You cannot have it if you do not understand, not merely that man has utterly failed in the responsibility that has been put into his hand, but that as Christ looks at us, individually, He says, I cannot put any confidence here. It may be very fair before man, but will not do for God-as a seeming fair parchment-but all shriveled when you want to use it. We must have done with self.

Just see practically the difference of a soul that is in that state before Christ, and knows that the Christ, who has apprehended it for the glory, has marked everything for us in connection with that glory: it will never stand for a moment questioning the sufficiency of His work. Mark, too, the effect upon a soul that has thus individually to do with Christ. It is on earth-Christ is in heaven. True, but it has got to do with Him who is the antagonist of Satan, and so get practically under another power.

Christ is above, reading everything for you; in everything He lets all the affections of His heart flow out upon you in the difficulties of the place where you are-and we do not give up, for we have a great High Priest, passed into heaven, touched with the feeling of our infirmities!

But what is the real cause of the little going forward in unearthliness? Why has there been any turning back? Why has there not been a going on in that holy, perfect Nazariteship? Why am I practically less heavenly than I was? I believe the answer to be this: The heart not abiding in the light of the searching eye of Christ in heaven. Making its experience down here, instead of reading the whole volume in the light of Christ: being before God in everything. There is no power of blessing but what begins with Christ, and goes on with Christ.

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